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## Accenture Song targets media agencies in move to full service agency

By DANIELLE LONG  
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16/8/23 Mark Green, Accenture Song ANZ President at The Australian / Growth Agenda event with the Advertising Council at the MCA in Sydney. John Feder/The Australian

Accenture Song, the creative unit of consultancy giant Accenture, is adding media planning and buying services to its portfolio, making it the first full-service agency offering from a “big four” firm in Australia.

To spearhead the new division, Accenture Song poached the management team from media agency Initiative Media, with chief executive officer Melissa Fein, national managing director Sam Geer and chief strategy and product officer Chris Colter set to join the business.

The move means Accenture Song can now provide clients with a fully-integrated experience comprising creative, technology and media services, helping the agency realise its ambition of providing a complete marketing suite.

It comes two months after NRMA Insurance appointed Accenture Song to deliver “end-to-end” services incorporating marketing, customer experience, digital, design and communications.

It's likely Accenture Song would now look to add media planning and buying services for NRMA Insurance. The account is currently managed by Initiative, which has run the entire account for IAG, NRMA's parent organisation, since 2021.

Accenture Song Australia and New Zealand president Mark Green called the three media executives “formidable talent” who would help the business “deliver future facing media and integrated solutions for our clients”.

He issued a statement saying media represented a significant opportunity as a “business growth driver and strategic differentiator”.

“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.”

While Accenture Song is yet to reveal details about the media unit, the appointment of the trio signals the business's intention of becoming a significant player in the market. Industry experts are predicting the business will take a bold new approach to trading media driven by technology and creativity.

Trinity P3 global chief executive officer Darren Woolley told The Growth Agenda: “Accenture won't want to trade media in the standard way, which is the principle-based media and arbitrage. I think they're looking to develop a whole new way of planning and buying media.”

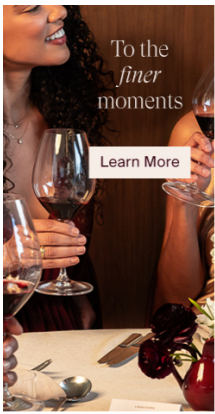
Mr Woolley predicts a “media planning and trading system that is technology-enabled with a creative focus”.

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"They've poached the highest-performing new business team that we've seen in recent times. They're a smart group and Mel (Melissa Fein) has a good track record for building high performing teams. Mark Green has a long-term history of success and bringing this team in to help accelerate their media presence, has the whole industry watching to see what happens," he said.

However, the move is not Accenture Song's first foray into media services, the agency first unveiled its media ambitions in 2022 appointing the former vice president and managing director of Essence Media Australia and New Zealand James Graver as media practice lead.

The fledgling media unit was understood to be working on both global and local clients, however, it never managed to secure any major local client wins.

Mr Graver left Accenture earlier this month.

Accenture Song has previously teamed with Initiative and its parent company Mediabrands to pitch for local accounts, including Coles in 2022 and Telstra in 2023.

While it was unsuccessful in winning both bids, the experience kickstarted conversations between Mr Green and the Initiative executives. Ms Fein, Mr Geer and Mr Colter are all highly respected throughout the media and advertising industry and are credited with leading Initiative through a growth period of new business success.

News of the trio's new positions stunned the market, with the move likely to significantly impact new business agendas within the industry.

It's also likely to ruffle feathers at rival agency groups Publicis Groupe and Clemenger Group as the three agencies face off in the final stage of a pitch for the lucrative Tourism Australia global advertising account.

Accenture Song's full-service play comes at an opportune time for the industry as marketers and c-suite executives push for greater integration across media and creative services to help manage the increased fragmentation in the marketplace.

Accenture Song is betting that adding a wealth of experienced media talent to the business will open doors with existing and new clients.

In March, Accenture Song acquired Melbourne-based marketing technology company The Lumery.

At the time Mr Green told The Growth Agenda: "Our aim is to offer our clients the opportunity to unite brand and experience to fuel sustainable growth. Having the best marketing, design and digital products, commerce and service capabilities in the market will help us deliver significant value to our clients. And that is recognised by the rapid growth we are seeing at Accenture Song and why Accenture is doubling down on its efforts to serve clients and the big market opportunity."

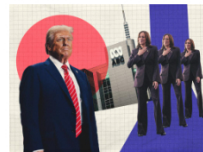
Accenture, alongside management consulting firms KPMG and Deloitte have invested heavily in building out digital, data, CX, creative and marketing services over the past decade.

While each of the firms have applied different structures they have all focused on poaching senior talent from the advertising industry.

Accenture's strategy has focused on creating "a new breed of agency" through a series of strategic acquisitions, including highly respected specialist agencies including advertising agency Droga5, design agency Fjord and homegrown creative powerhouse The Monkeys. Mr Green was a founder and chief executive of The Monkeys.



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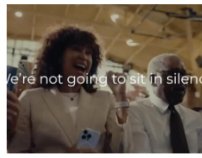
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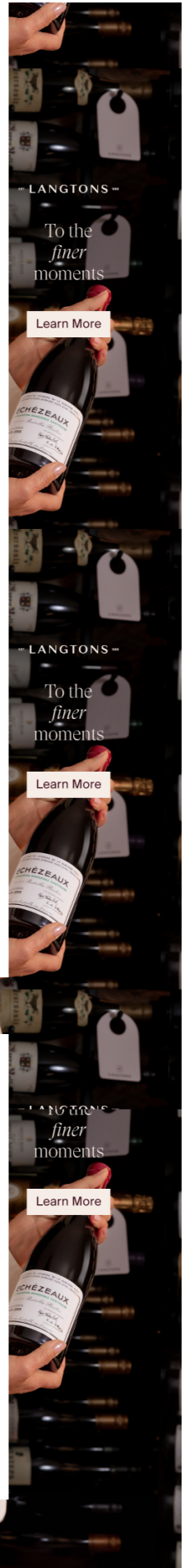
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