

Agency Republic

A focus on its media strategy and creative output, as well as innovation and digital experimentation, has seen Agency Republic return from a shaky 2007 to post a growth in profit. By *Fiona Ramsay*

Strength across all criteria – from existing client relationship-building to new business wins to staff development – set Agency Republic apart from its rivals.

The judges were particularly impressed by the 'nice balance of outward and inward-looking activity' as the agency, headed by Jane McNeill, has successfully refocused following an unsettled 2007, when key directors departed to launch digital agency Work Club.

However, this year marked a return to form for Agency Republic; it closed down its media planning and buying arm to focus on its main priorities of media strategy and creative output, and this has resulted in a 15% growth in both revenue and profits.

Business wins have included the COI's Tobacco Control work until 2011, while Agency Republic also has a long-term project from the Olympics and Adidas, which has appointed it as lead agency to encourage 14- to 18-year-olds to take up sport in the build-up to London 2012. It has also won a pitch from chocolate brand Green & Black's to develop its 2009 digital strategy.

Just as satisfying must be the organic growth from existing clients; this year the agency took on Bushmills, Gordon's and Bell's to grow its portfolio of UK brands with Diageo from five to eight.

Agency Republic's emphasis on the creative product, with a 40-strong creative team under Gavin Gordon-Rogers, was particularly evident this year – creative highlights



Agency Republic's website for Gordon's Gin and promotion for BBC Three's *The Mighty Boosh*



include an interactive website for Gordon's Gin that brings to life the heritage of the brand, the juniper berries, and, of course, the face of Gordon's – celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay.

The agency also produced effective work for advertisers with a small budget. Agency Republic promoted the third series of BBC Three's *The Mighty Boosh* by creating an interactive shop in London where consumers could download mobile content, backed by web activity, and the judges were impressed by this 'different approach'. The Pimm's 'Sunshine O'Clock', which prompted people to sit back and soak up the sun in their chosen London beer garden, also received praise.

For the judges, Agency Republic's innovation and thought-leadership stood out, with the agency's determination to 'live and breathe the world of digital' apparent in its recent work. Agency Republic has experimented with mobile Bluetooth geolocation technology, virtual bongo drums, an interactive cocktail shaker and face-mapping technology.

This digital experimentation, along with its drive to develop cut-through creative work and staff development initiatives, such as mapping out an individual career path for employees and offering digital training courses to clients including the BBC and Diageo, has made 2008 a rewarding year for Agency Republic. ■

Focus on Pimm's



The Pimm's-branded online sunshine finder, dubbed the 'It's Sunshine O'Clock' campaign, delivered solid results this summer and Agency Republic is now planning to replicate the tool to cities outside London.

The agency was tasked with using digital media to encourage consumers to see Pimm's as a relaxing summer drink, rather than one to be reserved for formal occasions.

Agency Republic developed a branded sunshine finder that tells users what time their local pubs and parks will be at their sunniest. The tool was hosted on *Time Out London* so visitors to the events listings site would interact with it more easily than they would on the Diageo website.

The campaign reached nearly 20,000 consumers in three months with no advertising support. It received interaction rates of two minutes and 46 seconds and helped increase sales of Pimm's in the London region by 7% compared with 2007.

Best of the rest

Previous winners

- 2007**
Dare
- 2006**
AKQA
- 2005**
Agency Republic
- 2004**
Agency Republic

GT and last year's winner, **Dare**, were both close contenders for the top accolade, according to the judges, jointly taking the runners-up spot.

The judges felt that WPP-owned GT was doing 'a good job in working towards more thought-leadership activities'. The agency has developed its own philosophy – 'Thinking human' – which has become central to its work ethic.

GT claimed £1m in new billings and won work for brands including TK Maxx, Colgate, Carphone Warehouse and the BBC, building on its 100% pitch success rate in 2007.

The agency also boosted its creative and planning teams with recruits Steve Whitely, Olly Robinson and Chris Wood. Creative highlights included a CRM campaign and a My Gig site for Xbox, which allowed music fans to create a fantasy gig for the chance to win a £50,000 party.

Dare, meanwhile, was praised last year for prioritising its existing clients and top-class creative thinking on long-term projects, and its success has continued into 2008. It says that this year has been the agency's best on record financially, with a 39% boost in profits and a 42% increase in revenues for the year to June.

Despite claiming that this year was about focusing on the measurement of the effectiveness of work for its existing client base, rather than client wins, the agency won work from BMW and Beck's. Its Music Mixer and Live Studio work for Beck's combined online and offline creativity, while it created its 'bravest' campaign – a nine-part thriller called *Johnny X* for Sony Ericsson's Xperia brand.



GT's My Gig site for Xbox (above) and Dare's Live Studio work for Beck's (below)



The judges felt **LBI** was 'getting under the skin of its clients' to foster good relationships, with 70% of its income driven by its top 20 accounts. LBI's work for BT and Marks & Spencer has driven growth in online sales coupled with customer loyalty. Account wins have also been important to the agency, however, with an estimated £8m in new business this year. LBI has also demonstrated flexibility on smaller projects, such as its campaign for Multimap, in which LBI teamed up with animation studio Aardman to give the site a personality. On a larger scale, LBI has developed a social networking project for HMV intended to bring people closer to music and film content.



Grand Union's 'porn' movie for the DoH (left) and **LBI's** campaign for Multimap (above)

Grand Union won a raft of business this year from an impressive range of brands, including Stella Artois, Waitrose, Heinz, Debenhams, Sportingbet and Canon.

It won nine of its 11 pitches, adding £5m extra revenue, while existing

client revenue increased by £1.2m. A new Boots.com site went live, while the agency has developed 52 new executions for Abbey during the past year. A more daring campaign was the Department of Health's 'porn' movie to promote condom use. The agency claims its solid client roster and talent will help it weather the storm and achieve growth in the coming year. ■