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Our annual look at the 10 best agencies in the business—and those that might make the list next year. Plus, Creativity's top shop.



## A-LIST

1. MCGARRY BOWEN
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4. MARTIN AGENCY
5. DRAFTFCB
6. AKQA
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9. WEBER SHANDWICK
10. VENABLES

SAM HADLEY

# AGENCY A-LIST

Ad Age names the agencies that showed moxie, innovation and effectiveness in 2009

## 5. DRAFTFCB



Three years after the merger that created DraftFCB, clients are embracing the agency's varied offerings under one roof.

■ BY JEREMY MULLMAN [jmullman@adage.com](mailto:jmullman@adage.com)

EVER SINCE THE merger of creative agency Foote Cone & Belding and direct-marketing shop Draft that created it in 2006, DraftFCB has often billed itself as having the agency model of the future.

But the roots of the agency's recent success are actually quite old-fashioned: stellar account management and an unwavering focus on moving clients' sales needles.

Consider that, in a year when organic growth was hard to come by across the industry, the Interpublic-owned shop found enough to drive it to mid-single digit revenue gains, fueled largely by satisfied long-time clients such as MillerCoors and Kraft moving major new accounts into the agency.

The reason, clients say, is a fixation that borders on obsessive. "We often talk about how we have brand maniacs," said Yum Brands CEO David Novak. "Well, they are client maniacs. They are genuine business partners who really care about the success of our brands."

It would be easy to counter, of course, that every agency cares—or at least ought to care—about its client's performance. But few shops can boast as many sales surges by their largest and highest profile clients as Draft did last year.

By positioning Kraft's frozen pizza brand, DiGiorno, as an alternative to delivery, it drove 20% sales gains (Kraft later elected to sell the red-hot brand, along with its others in the category, in order to finance its deal for Cadbury). A relentless, disciplined focus on cold refreshment made Coors Light the only major premium beer brand to grow sales. And its work on KFC's grilled-chicken launch—dubbed the most-successful launch in Yum's history by Mr. Novak—gave that chain its best same-store-sales improvement in a decade.

Top executives say those bottom-line results matter far more than the trophies that major network rivals tend to collect more of. "I don't think we enter as many contests as some of the other guys," said Global Chief Creative Officer Jonathan Harries. "We've always focused on doing work that builds America's most-popular brands, stuff the public loves."

One long-running advantage the shop can boast is the depth of business knowledge possessed by the agency's account leads, a direct

result of long-term client relationships such as S.C. Johnson (56 years), Kraft (55) and Coors (31).

That's never clearer than it is on MillerCoors, where CMO Andy England notes that longtime account lead Marty Stock "finishes my sentences," and "often knows I have a problem before I do."

Case in point: When Draft earned its first project work on Miller Lite in late 2008, the agency didn't wait for testing to tell it that the work wasn't connecting. Forty years of category experience told it so. "They'd already put seven creative teams on developing alternate ideas before the results even came back," said Mr. England. MillerCoors ultimately awarded the shop agency-of-record status on Miller Lite, which shells out more than \$100 million per year on measured media, making it the agency's biggest account win of the year.

"I'd agree (account management) has played a big role," said CEO Laurence Boschetto. "But it's also holistic management, because if you don't have the creative product and the strategic product, they're not going to give you new business." He argues that Draft has been able to grow so many existing accounts largely because the agency has developed so many competencies under a single profit-and-loss statement.

There's certainly evidence for that claim on last year's new-business ledger: The shop won media-planning duties on MillerCoors' \$400 million consolidated account and digital chores for Yum's KFC and Kraft's A1. It added marketing and promotion on Kraft's coffees and teas, and multicultural work for both Qwest and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Florida. (DraftFCB now has more than 50 employees in its multicultural department and late last year added former Grupo Gallegos stalwart Ken Muench as its new director-multicultural planning.)

Clients entirely new to the agency included Starbucks, Alberto Culver, Del Monte Foods, Morgan Stanley and Newell-Rubbermaid, while its losses were limited to Hewlett Packard's Technology Services Group, GlaxoSmithKline's Alli and Kraft's Lunchables.

All that growth has transformed Draft's de facto North American headquarters in Chicago—where North American President Mark Modesto is based—into what the agency calls "the single largest holistic ad agency in the U.S." That status is significant because of its implicit boast that, within Interpublic, DraftFCB has surpassed McCann Erickson's New York office for that designation, and, within Chicago, it has surpassed the city's longtime standard-bearer, Leo Burnett. (Burnett disputes that.)

Seeing such myriad and integrated capabilities driving the agency's growth is, of course, exactly what Interpublic had in mind when it merged Draft and FCB in 2006 and the agency won the year's biggest creative review for Walmart.

But the well-documented controversy that ensued before it lost the account (we won't rehash the details again here) is finally fading. Executive Chairman Howard Draft said he's relieved to see his agency once again receiving notice for its work and not its gossip fodder. "At the end of the day, it's what we should be recognized for," he said. "It's about our people and our clients."

## DRAFTFCB

For more information, visit [www.draftfc.com](http://www.draftfc.com) or email us at [info@draftfc.com](mailto:info@draftfc.com).