

PRWeek

Large PR Agency of the Year 2009

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BUSINESS – AGENCY

Winner

Edelman

Edelman is no stranger to this honor, having won Large Agency of the Year in 2008. And its continued strength in the areas of financial performance, innovation, and client relationships convinced this year's judges that, once again, it should be this category's top choice.

Over the entry period, the agency grew 19% globally to \$448 million and 16% in the US to \$288 million, "amazing growth considering their already large base of revenue," according to one judge. Nearly all of this growth was organic, and the agency exceeded its internal forecasts in every region and practice. Part of that organic growth is due to its long-term client relationships, which include Heinz, Wyeth, Butterball, ConAgra Foods, Johnson & Johnson, Unilever, UPS, and Kraft.

Even more impressive, the firm retained all of its top 50 clients, which now account for more than 50% of worldwide billings. But the agency also managed to add 279 new clients during the entry period. The largest wins included Teleflora, Pepsi, and Hewlett-Packard.

Although much of Edelman's innovation over the past four or five years has been in the digital



space, it has branched out in the past year. In 2008, it launched Edelman Studios, a virtual studio designed to pair emerging talent and established storytellers with brands and companies that are looking to connect with consumers in new ways. It also created the Boomer Insights Generation Group, a virtual practice to support clients that market to baby boomers.

Because talent is at the heart of any agency's success, Edelman took steps to improve its employee retention and training. It reduced US voluntary turnover by 8%. In addition, the agency enhanced Edelman University, its in-house education program, offering 80,000 hours of instruction, a 125% increase from 2007.

It also established a new mentorship program which pairs 80 VPs and SVPs with GMs. Continuing a long-standing tradition of pro bono support, in 2008 Edelman made a \$350,000 commitment for staff to contribute time and skills to youth education around the world.

Arguably, Edelman's position of thought leadership in the industry is unrivaled. CEO Richard Edelman is a highly visible figure within the industry and a member of the Arthur W. Page Society. In addition, members of the firm's management hold active memberships in organizations ranging from the World Wildlife Fund to the Prince of Wales Foundation. As one judge put it, "Edelman continues to evolve and lead."

The Award

Open to any firm whose current annual PR income (consisting of fees plus mark-up for disbursements) is \$65 million or higher. The CEOs of each firm were required to certify in writing that the agency's annual PR income met those qualifications, as well as date of incorporation and number of employees. This award recognizes financial and client-list growth, client retention, and PR creativity and innovation.

Finalists 2009

- Edelman
- GolinHarris
- Ketchum
- Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide
- Weber Shandwick

