

WCJ drive to CRM spurs name change

TORONTO—The global metamorphosis direct-response agency Wunderman Cato Johnson (WCJ) has been undergoing the past year to a customer relationship management (CRM) profile has culminated in sweeping changes including a name change.

The 40-year-old venerable agency that was first formed in the U.S. and has done so much business under the WCJ banner is now called Impiric, pronounced im-Peer-ic. The name is said to better reflect its new integrated service offerings.

Other changes include strengthened R&D and technology capabilities through the introduction of a worldwide R&D facility called the Marketing Lab. As well, new strategic partnerships have been formed with Digital Impact and EchoMail to deliver proprietary communications and database technologies to Impiric clients.

The company claims the cumulative effect makes Impiric the first to integrate the people, processes and technology that let companies secure and retain their most profitable customers. Impiric is said to gain the capabilities for predicting a company's return on investment (ROI) in marketing applications, technology infrastructure, and CRM ventures. It sees the moves redefining the marketplace for all CRM consultancies.

"The global marketplace has fundamentally changed," says Trish Wheaton, now managing director of the newly named Impiric in Canada. "Technology has shifted the balance of power, and the customer is in control."

"Here in Canada and around the world, companies are recognizing this and are searching for partners that can provide them with integrated CRM solutions. We believe Impiric is the first of a new breed of professional services firms that encompasses all elements of the marketing mix for its clients, bringing insight, imagination and impact to the equation—three critical elements represented by the three 'T's' in Impiric."



Trish Wheaton says Impiric is the first of a new breed of professional services firms.

The company's Canadian office opened in Montreal in 1972. Today Impiric Canada has more than 160 employees with head office in Toronto.

The CRM transition was abetted in Canada when WCJ and Firstcom Marketing, both in the Young & Rubicam (Y&R) family, merged in

See WCJ, page 16

WCJ

Continued from front page

1998. It spawned the creation of the Relationship Management Centre, manned initially by half the Firstcom staff not moved to WCJ headquarters. The centre furnishes teleservices, data collection and Internet expertise.

The Y&R acquisition early last year of KnowledgeBase Marketing, Chapel Hill, NJ, was another large stride toward CRM for WCJ both in the U.S. and Canada. KnowledgeBase is a provider of CRM services. It fashions integrated information marketing for companies doing consumer and business-to-business marketing.

Now it appears Impiric is adding further R&D muscle through the launch of Marketing Lab. It will focus on all aspects of CRM through the incubation of ideas and the development and execution of new marketing programs and services.

Lester Wunderman, WCJ's fabled founder, will serve as its worldwide director and chief scientist. Dr. Paul Evans has been appointed worldwide executive vice-president. Also playing important roles in running the Lab will be Impiric CEO and Chairman Jay Bingle and Peter Georgescu, Y&R chairman emeritus, along with other high-profile executives hired recently.

The Lab is said to offer a series of proprietary and innovative customer-oriented approaches. They include the thought leadership exchange, the CRM cockpit technology project, and the CRM diagnostic tool.

The thought leadership exchange is a Web-based information centre and virtual marketing community. It will furnish marketing knowledge, publications and networking. It will also sponsor seminars, breakfast discussions and other professional forums.

The CRM cockpit technology project is described as a custom-built portal for real-time monitoring and managing of customer touchpoints across the client organization. The CRM diagnostic tool is said to be a mechanism to help companies quickly assess and eliminate gaps in their CRM capabilities and needs.

Other Lab efforts include research projects devoted to interactive TV and smart cards. A new venture incubator provides Impiric and Y&R marketing facilities to new start-up companies. A marketing pilot and demonstration centre explores unconventional approaches to marketing problems.

Impiric indicated that the two strategic alliances unveiled would be the first of many. It will seek others to further bolster its ability to help clients harness the latest CRM technologies.

Digital Impact, San Mateo, CA, supplies Internet direct marketing systems that help companies create complete electronic marketing life cycle plans by deploying sophisticated strategies for increased customer acquisition, retention and conversion. The strategies include personalization, individual tracking, detailed campaign analysis, feedback driven action and scalable technology.

EchoMail is an e-mail pioneer with proprietary technology and a suite of software that lets companies automatically read, store, classify, route, log and track in-bound e-mail in real time. Its patented technology also helps customer-focused enterprises launch multimedia e-mail campaigns for building brand loyalty through improved customer relationships.

Impiric has more than 80 offices in more than 40 countries employing almost 4,000 people. Its global client roster includes IBM, AT&T, Ericsson, Star Alliance, Xerox, Ford, Sony, and CitiGroup. It is a wholly owned Y&R subsidiary. ■