

<https://www.marketingdive.com/news/publiciss-blue-449-tops-media-agencies-for-performance-in-h1-study-says/532127/>

Publicis's Blue 449 tops media agencies for performance in H1, study says

Dive Brief:

Publicis Groupe's Blue 449 was the top-performing media agency in first half 2018, **according to a new COMvergence report** provided to Marketing Dive. Blue 449's ranking was due to the company retaining its T-Mobile offline account, worth an estimated \$940 million. However, Blue 449 lost T-Mobile's digital planning and buying business, estimated to be worth \$50 million, to GroupM's Essence.

The report assessed 70 major media pitches or moves without a review during H1 2018, which the firm estimates totaled \$5.9 billion in value. COMvergence found that media account retentions continued to see declines, with five retentions out of 66 accounts assessed in H1 2018 compared to eight out of 99 in 2017 and 16 out of 94 two years ago.

Publicis Media ranked first from a group perspective in terms of total new business values with just over \$1 billion. Business gains in COMvergence's assessment include new clients and retentions, minus losses. Mediabrands saw \$635 million, followed by Omnicom Media Group with \$244 million, MDC Media Partners with \$119 million and Havas Media Group at \$117 million. Dentsu Aegis Network saw \$911 million in client losses, and GroupM had a \$688 million loss.

Dive Insight:

COMvergence's report helps to give a read on the pulse of the media agency space in 2018. While some of the large ad holding groups, including Publicis and its shops like Blue 449, are experiencing gains, the broader landscape continues to grapple with a lot of business on the move as brands search out marketing service partners with greater agility and adaptability to digital disruption.

In fact, **COMvergence predicts that** U.S. media spend under review will possibly surpass \$11 billion this year, compared to \$8.9 billion in 2017 and \$11 billion in 2016. The finding lends credence to the idea that 2018 is in some ways mirroring the "MediaPalooza" that happened several years ago, where a historic number of accounts went under review, shaking up the agency space. During the previous MediaPalooza, a bombshell report by K2 Intelligence commissioned by the Association of National Advertisers uncovered widespread non-transparent agency practices related to the handling of client fees and cash rebates, which potentially accelerated the number of reviews at the time.

Marketers today are, in turn, expecting greater transparency from their agencies, and are more frequently wanting to streamline media, creative and digital services under one umbrella as a cost-cutting measure. This has led to an uptick in the number of brands that handle services such as media planning and buying in-house. The number of advertisers with in-house agencies has increased to 64% from 42% a decade ago, according to a recent study by Forrester and the In-house Agency Forum. Many brands also see traditional ad holding companies as struggling to understand and implement marketing technology.

Marketers, beyond more frequently eschewing traditional agencies, are also reworking how they work with their existing ones as their priorities shift. COMvergence noted five major advertisers that have moved their media accounts to dedicated media operating units in 2018, including Campbell's Soup to Campbell's Team via Publicis Media; Estee Lauder to Elevate, a dedicated unit created by Mediabrands; BP to Team Energy via WPP; and Marriott to Marriott One Media via Publicis Groupe. Nestle has also moved to Team Nestle, a standalone group within GroupM, from Mindshare/MetaVision Media.