

MINDSHARE

Determining the core ethos behind the behemoth that is MindShare is surprisingly easy. A quick semiotic analysis of the fashion sense of the chief of strategy, Nick Emery, will do. Emery, a founding member, is a well-groomed man in his forties, with a neat haircut and a proclivity for wearing Ramones T-shirts.

The WPP-owned, Group M-cossetted global network may have been softened by the trappings of its own success over the years, but, like Emery, it still likes to think of itself as a spiky, seditious punk underneath it all. And now, on its tenth birthday, MindShare wants to go back to its radical roots.

The £10.5 billion business recently unveiled its restructure, which its global chief executive, Dominic Proctor, proclaims will be “the new model of the agency of the future” – a model he feels reflects MindShare’s true spirit.

“I think when we launched ten years ago, it was a radical positioning. In those ten years others have already caught up with us, but we haven’t lost that spirit,” Proctor explains.

The unveiling was quickly followed by an oracular pronouncement from the chief executive of WPP, Sir Martin Sorrell, urging the industry to move towards owning and producing content, and increasing advertising’s involvement in the creation of film and television series. Advertising, according to Sorrell, has a starring role on screen – and it’s one already played by MindShare, and a central pillar of the agency’s new model.

Cynics may argue that we’ve heard similar murmurings on restructuring before from other agencies, but MindShare is adamant that this is different, radical, and the direction the advertising industry is going.

Emery asserts: “Creative agencies say they are all about digital, but they’re still about the 30-second spot because that’s where they’re made. Media agencies say they’re all about ideas, but they’re about buying cheaper space. It’s a confidence trick on the client. They’re trying to sell themselves by saying they are a 360-degree agency, and they’re not. So what we wanted to do was develop a strategy which really puts the client at the centre.”

Emery, never one for understatement, calls the restructuring a “scorched-earth policy”. Conversely, Proctor opts for decidedly more tepid IT terminology. It is the way, he says, to “reboot” MindShare: “Our ambition is to be client-led partners, and to move right up the strategic hierarchy.”

The principal architects of the plan, Emery and MindShare’s head of communications planning, Marco Rimini, see the new-model agency as the backbone, or “global glue”, of a client’s marketing activity.

The goal is to provide all of its clients’ marketing services through four new groups, namely Client Leadership, Business Planning, content creation (called Invention) and trading (The Exchange).

It works thus: a client comes in, is guided by senior executives in the Client Leadership group, and, depending on the client’s size, problem and the market, the client leaders will select the most suitable bunch of people from across the other new groups to work on the account.

Emery explains: “It’s like being in the playground where everyone is lined up and then picked for the team. We line up all our people in front of our client. Each team will be different

“I’m sure media planning and buying will be the bulk of what we do, but the revenue streams from new areas will increase”

Dominic Proctor (right), global chief executive, MindShare

because each client has a different remit and different needs.”

MindShare’s Business Planning group, comprised of analytics and strategic experts, will work on finding solutions to clients’ business problems. Entertainment and sponsorship-creation is the focus at Invention, where people from these disciplines work alongside digital and strategic planners to produce and develop content ideas. The Exchange combines all digital and non-digital trading.

Each individual group consults and collaborates with the others. The key to the model is its flexibility. Rimini says: “If the client wants to keep its creative agencies, we work with them. We devised a whole system, but the client doesn’t have to use the whole thing; they can just use part of it.”

The reorganisation is their response to a rapidly changing digital world and the new media channels and competitors it presents. “In the new world,

