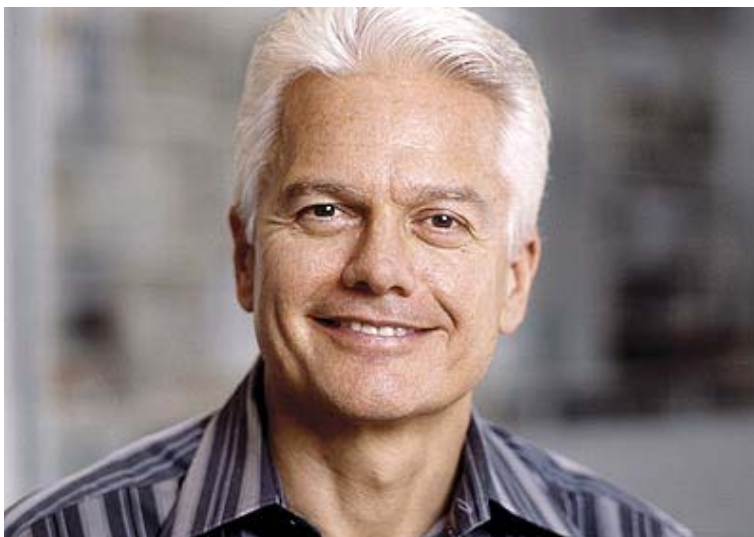


Face value**Trying a new pitch**

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JWT

**Bob Jeffrey is trying to rebrand a grand-daddy of advertising**

"AS PIONEERS of advertising it is time for us to trail blaze again," announces the corporate website of JWT. By changing its name earlier this year to a more fashionable abbreviation, the advertising agency formerly known as J. Walter Thompson has resorted to the oldest trick in the book for its own rebranding. This change is supposed to mark a rite of passage: away from a media market dominated by 30-second commercials on mainstream TV channels toward one in which clients chase consumers along multiple routes across an increasingly fragmented media landscape in which the internet is crucial.

Changing the name of America's biggest, and the world's fourth-biggest, advertising agency was a symbolic but necessary measure, insists Bob Jeffrey, who became JWT's global head in January 2004. Anyway, he adds, many people were already referring to the agency by its initials. But it will need more than symbolic changes for this giant, or its rivals on Madison Avenue, the spiritual home of America's advertising industry, to survive and prosper in the marketing future now unfolding.

The good news is that after a deep slump, advertising spending is growing again. The global ad market could be some 4.7% bigger this year than last, with spending of over \$400 billion, forecasts ZenithOptimedia, a research company. However, less happily, Zenith says that growth in spending on TV commercials has already peaked, and may begin to shrink—just as spending on advertising is already shrinking in other traditional media, such as newspapers and magazines. The fastest growing part of the advertising market is now the internet, accounting for more than 5% of America's total ad spending last year. Internet advertising is forecast to double in value within a few years.

"There is not one CEO that I have talked to that hasn't got the message about how rapidly communications are changing, and the influence of technology," says Mr Jeffrey. But simply rushing to plaster websites with irritating ads that get in the way of what users are trying to do is hardly the way forward, he acknowledges. Many people in developed markets consider themselves "time poor". And that, argues Mr Jeffrey, means that consumers are increasingly likely to resist marketing methods that

demand significant amounts of their time and attention.

JWT seems to have the strengths needed to confront these changes: a glorious 141-year history, a worldwide staff of 8,500 and a list of blue-chip clients including Ford, Unilever and Pfizer. But will any of these really be strengths? In the future many traditional elements of its craft may no longer work. So Mr Jeffrey is launching what he claims is a revolution. "We are basically changing everybody's roles and responsibilities."

Advertising has traditionally been run in a sort of linear way: an agency would find out what consumers thought about a client's product, use that as the basis to develop a campaign to promote the product, and then monitor and evolve the campaign as it proceeded. Now the process has to become more "holistic" and account managers need to be "executive producers of ideas", says Mr Jeffrey. Creative ideas can emerge from all sorts of places and be used in many different ways to engage consumers and persuade them "to spend time with the brand", he adds. Television can still be part of the process—after all, lots of people still watch it—but it is no longer at the centre.

The coming launch in America this autumn of a new Ford Fusion car provides an example of where advertising is going. Even before the car has gone on sale, the campaign has begun with the creation of a website. Among other things, the website promises a series of "flash concerts" by some leading rock bands and hip-hop artists. These are musical events to be held at secret locations and announced at the last minute via e-mail and text-messaging. Ford—through JWT—is doing this because it hopes to win more younger, urban buyers for its car.

Partly in anticipation of this more complicated market, many ad agencies have clustered into four big global groups that bring together a wide range of resources, from public relations to direct marketing and media buying. They are America's Omnicom and Interpublic, France's Publicis and Britain's WPP, of which JWT is a part. In a significant recent development, some big accounts are now being won by an entire group, rather than by individual agencies. WPP, for instance, has won global responsibility for the accounts of HSBC and Samsung. But how strong a trend this will be is unclear, as some big advertisers still say they prefer to deal directly with individual agencies.

One of the latest accounts to come up for review is that of British Airways, which is finding that the internet is now one of the most important ways to stay in touch with customers and to receive bookings. For over two decades the airline's advertising account, now worth £60m (\$108m) a year, has been handled by Maurice and Charles Saatchi, who are sure to fight hard as others bid for it. JWT, along with the Saatchis' agency, is on a shortlist of four agencies that will pitch for the account in September.

How to get ahead in advertising

JWT was the first agency to develop artwork and copy for its clients, so there is something to its pioneering boasts. Can it shake things up again? The firm's ability to be creative will be more crucial than ever, says Mr Jeffrey—which may not be surprising, given that he has held a number of creative posts with other agencies and built his own company before joining JWT in 1998 to run its flagship New York office. He turned that office around en route to becoming chief executive last year. Today, he says, the advertiser should start with an idea and then find the people with the talents, capabilities and resources to carry it out. But those ideas had better be good. Today's consumers not only have more choice than ever, both in terms of goods and media, but also seem less tolerant than ever of the boring or irrelevant.