

Ad Chief Behind 'Fearless Girl' Exits McCann Agency for WPP 2

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Technology

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517 words

15 January 2021

The Wall Street Journal

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English

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Rob Reilly, the McCann Worldgroup creative chief who worked on the "Fearless Girl" campaign for State Street Corp., is leaving the Interpublic Group of Cos. agency to join rival advertising behemoth WPP PLC.

Mr. Reilly's appointment to the newly created post of global chief creative officer signals WPP's commitment to creative functions, according to the company, after recent changes that have favored its digital marketing operations.

"This is part of the strategy for WPP to put creativity at the heart of the company," said WPP Chief Executive Officer Mark Read. "In a world where it's harder to reach consumers, and more ideas are fighting for attention, it's become even more important."

WPP in the last year has reorganized its agencies in an effort to simplify its operations, giving priority to its digital marketing business over more traditional creative agencies in the process.

It combined the traditional agency Grey with digital agency AKQA, for example, to form AKQA Group.

The hire is part of a plan to evolve WPP's creative strategy and combine creative and digital expertise, said Mr. Read. "Rob's appointment is rebalancing our efforts, obviously slightly more toward creativity," he said.

"If we've had issues with our creative agencies at WPP, it's because we were over-focused on creativity that fits inside traditional analog ad units like TV commercials," he said. "We need to redefine and invent creativity for a **technology** and digital driven world and that's what he's going to help us do."

Mr. Reilly, who will start at WPP in May, is known for his creative ideas and work on buzz-generating campaigns, including the installation of a bronze statue of a girl facing down the iconic "Charging Bull" statue in lower Manhattan on behalf of State Street Global Advisors.

The "Fearless Girl" became a symbol of female empowerment and stirred discussion of gender diversity in business.

At McCann, Mr. Reilly also worked on campaigns for Microsoft Corp., Mastercard Inc. and Verizon Communications Inc. He joined McCann in 2014 after spending a decade at Crispin Porter & Bogusky LLC, where his client work spanned Burger King's "Subservient Chicken" campaign and American Express Co.'s Small Business Saturday program.

At WPP, he will work closely with individual agency teams and clients and contribute a creative perspective to company meetings, said Mr. Read.

Mr. Reilly said he would also focus on nurturing creative talent. "I'm going to make sure all our companies and networks have the best talent, the best processes," said Mr. Reilly. "There's a lot to do."

Since Mr. Read took the helm in 2018, WPP has largely blamed creative agencies for dragging down the group's performance.

As part of the turnaround plan under Mr. Read, the company said it would invest GBP 15 million (\$20.5 million) a year until 2021 in creative leadership, with a focus on the U.S.

WPP's investments so far have been in line with that target, said Mr. Read.

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