

Amp Agency Buys Search Shop

Boston ad firm bolsters its search offering via acquisition

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BOSTON The Amp Agency here, best known for its racy campaigns touting LifeStyles condoms, has acquired Rock Coast Media, an independent interactive and search marketing shop in Newburyport, Mass.

The deal brings Rock Coast's 10 employees into the Amp fold as part of the latter's media services group that focuses on search, public relations and related offerings. That unit will employ 25 staffers with the addition of Rock Coast's personnel.

Former Rock Coast leaders Stephen Anderson (pictured) and Josh Pike become svps at Amp. Terms of the deal were not disclosed.

Though most smaller and mid-sized shops are playing it safe in the uncertain economy, Amp has been fairly aggressive, making two acquisitions in as many years. The agency's deal with Rock Coast follows its 2008 absorption of creatively focused Fulgent Media Group.

Gary Colen, CEO of Amp, said the need to provide comprehensive strategic services under one roof is driving the need for expansion. Adding Rock Coast improves Amp's search offering and allows the shop to help clients "maximize their online investment and extend the impact of campaigns," he said.

One seasoned local exec applauded the union. "These agencies will be stronger together," said Andrew Graff, CEO of Watertown, Mass.-based Allen & Gerritsen and chairman of Boston's Ad Club. "The combination of experiential and digital is a fast growing segment, and search is instrumental to marketing, so this move absolutely makes sense."

Longtime agency exec and former consultant Chris Colbert, CEO of Boston's Holland Mark, took a pragmatic view: "On the face of it, a good move -- playing to the market demand, diversifying the offering. [But] it's increasingly less about any specific discipline and more about the capacity to help guide marketing, where marketing is defined by the total experience, including the value proposition of the product or service itself. The most profound consequence of social media is that it lays bare the truth of that proposition. And no amount of brilliant advertising, online or off, will make a bad product or service experience good."

Amp and Rock Coast shared one piece of business, Boyne Resorts, prior to the acquisition. Other Rock Coast accounts include real-estate giant Coldwell Banker and cruise lines Princess and Cunard. In addition to the aforementioned LifeStyles, Amp's roster boasts Maybelline, US Cellular and Massport, among others.

Amp is a unit of Alloy Media + Marketing.

- David Gianatasio

http://www.adweek.com/aw/content_display/news/agency/e3i04ac5aa7296d367c349d99d6f365f087