

and meet stakeholder demands (31%) as the chief reasons their organization is "going green."

Our study also found a major gap: 88% of business leaders report their company is "going green," yet only 29% of executives and 17% of consumers believe that a majority of businesses are committed to sustainability. We believe communications can serve as a catalyst for the ag industry to elevate itself by developing common standards and sharing best green practices.

And, we'll be leading those conversations into our next 40 years and beyond.

### WHAT SHOULD CLIENTS EXPECT FROM THEIR AGENCY?

#### MCCORMICK COMPANY

Kansas City, MO

by Evan Davies

Executive VP

It's easy to come up with a list of what clients should expect. Who would be surprised if the answer was breakthrough creative?

Certainly outstanding service warrants a place at the top of the list. The current wave of innovations that include social media and mobile



Davies

communications has clients expecting agencies to demonstrate a solid understanding of their strategic and tactical value. And let's not ignore prosaic expectations like accurate billing.

So how do you answer a question that has so many dimensions, both large and small? The only way I can devise an answer is to step back from the complexity of day-to-day demands and requirements to see the broader picture of client-agency relationships. From there, the answer quickly crystallizes into one simple fact — it's people.

And if people make an agency what it is, then clients should expect their agency to hire, develop and maintain the best staff possible.

Successful agencies do this by adhering to a deep-seated set of core

values that individually define their firm. This should not be confused with vision statements or the like, which from my experience are squishy and uninspiring.

As a rule, agencies that have great people working in concert with great clients do not need these values spelled out. It's reinforced everyday through how the work gets done.

A hallmark of the agricultural communications category is its legacy of agencies that built strong businesses by staying true to a set of values. Another characteristic of our category is the predominance of independently owned firms. I have never viewed the co-existence of these two facts as happenstance.

This year McCormick Company marks 85 years in operation. I believe this accomplishment is a validation of the values that have been our foundation. This includes building a common sense of purpose that lives in our commitment to each other's success.

So the answer still comes down to people. A client should expect each individual at the agency — regardless of department or function — to be focused on the success of their business.

### WHAT ARE THE MAJOR TRENDS?

#### PAULSEN MARKETING

Sioux Falls, SD

by Sara Steever

VP/Digital Services

Producer's use of technologies is statistically on par with the population as a whole. This fact is driving several trends within agencies.

Mobile is certainly top of mind within developing trends. New devices deploy constantly, requiring new skill sets for agency staff. The race to produce native apps has had the unfortunate affect of leaving legacy web properties with poor user experiences. Tactics like QR codes and marketing e-mails drive users to web sites that are not mobile optimized.

Fortunately, a debate has begun that will bring clarity to the native app vs. web app dilemma. Responsive web solutions such as CSS3, media queries, jQuery Mobile and HTML5 provide flexible options for developers and designers as they

tackle countless screen sizes, but a true mobile strategy brings down department walls and begins with the end user.

It may be a stretch to call social media a mature trend, but it does seem that agencies have settled in on the services they provide their clients. The vehicles within social media are still evolving, but structure, processes and methodology are signs that it's growing up. Social media and the power of opinion are changing the way people

research and buy. Paulsen Marketing has recently released a thought paper on the impact of micro and macro influencers on brands through reviews and other social media



Steever

vehicles. We've found, for example, that advertising needs to evolve in areas such as digital point-of-purchase in order to drive sales. For more information, you can find the full study at [www.agribranding.com](http://www.agribranding.com).

Almost every digital tactic has benefited in the last year from improved technologies. Digital ads are served based on individual user behavior and demographics across thousands of web sites. Post-impression tracking and retargeting bring value to banner campaigns.

Google continues to expand SEM opportunities from local to international. Online software for social media monitoring, e-mail marketing, media and analytics are much more advanced, requiring further specialization of staff. Data streams are gathered together to refine messaging, media strategies, customer service, reputation, distribution and budgets.

As ag agencies fully embrace the sophistication of producers, trends will likely multiply and accelerate. To stay relevant, agencies must invest in research, center staff and capabilities on client strategy, and market based on customer behaviors.

It's a great time to be in the biz!

(more on page 36)