

ADWEEK

Chrysler Shifts Dealer, Retail Biz to Doner

The nameplate replaces Mazda, which Doner lost in June

Nov 15, 2010

- David Kiley



Chrysler has awarded its dealer/retail advertising -- estimated to be worth potentially \$500 million in billings next year -- to Doner, according to Olivier Francois, the automaker's chief marketer, who is also CEO of the Chrysler brand.

The assignment means Doner, Southfield, Mich., will produce all retail- and dealer-oriented ads for Chrysler, Dodge and Jeep brands as part of the year-end effort to clear dealer lots. The agency stands a good chance to retain the business for next year as well.

In addition, Doner -- which lost its \$150 million Mazda Motor North America account in June -- is one of a handful of agencies competing to handle Chrysler's brand advertising, said Francois. (Minneapolis-based Fallon resigned the Chrysler brand account last June, when it was by General Motors.)

Since Fallon resigned Chrysler, Wieden + Kennedy, which won the Dodge ad assignment last year, has pitched Chrysler, preparing new campaigns for the Chrysler 200 and Town & Country minivan, as well as producing a campaign that recently launched the Jeep Grand Cherokee. The Richards Group, Dallas, handles Ram truck

advertising. Global Hue handles multicultural advertising, as well as some Jeep brand work. Francois also tapped Gotham, New York, to produce a corporate marketing push last summer. That work, by Gotham, has not run, and may not, because Chrysler opted to put more media weight behind the Grand Cherokee rather than a new corporate brand campaign.

Francois arrived at Chrysler after Fiat SPA took control of the company in 2009 during the U.S. government-assisted bankruptcy reorganization. In addition to serving as CEO of the Chrysler brand, he holds marketing, advertising and branding responsibilities for nine brands: Fiat, Fiat Professional, Abarth, Alfa Romeo, Lancia, Chrysler, Jeep, Dodge and Ram.

Francois, after being charged with running Chrysler's overall marketing a little over a year ago, wasted little time in firing BBDO, Detroit, which had handled all three of Chrysler's brands for decades. "I think it is better that we have agencies all over the country with different points of views and different talents," said Francois, who uses Leo Burnett as a lead agency for Fiat and Alfa Romeo in Europe, but also draws on other agencies.

Doner has a track record with Mazda and Ford for handling the often demanding grind of retail auto advertising. But Francois noted that the shop, which had created the "Zoom Zoom" positioning for Mazda in the late 1990s, "brought a real creative flair to our end of year advertising that was very refreshing." He also said Chrysler would lean on Doner's local production and editing facilities.

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Doner CEO David DeMuth said the agency is "energized" by the Chrysler assignment. "There's a real sense of creative energy and momentum at Chrysler right now and we couldn't be more excited to be a part of it," he said. "Developing advertising intended to drive sales and advance the distinct voices that have been created for brands like Chrysler, Jeep, Dodge and Ram is an incredible opportunity for Doner."



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