

# ADWEEK

## Doner Adds \$60 Mil. From Choice Hotels, Harman

### Agency added big billings from Chrysler just a few weeks ago

Nov 30, 2010

- David Kiley



Independent Doner in Southfield, Mich., has been awarded the ad accounts of Choice Hotels and Harman Audio, worth some \$60 million in combined billings.

The wins come a few weeks after [Chrysler confirmed it chose Doner to handle the dealer and retail advertising](#) for its Chrysler, Jeep and Dodge brands, a \$500 million assignment.

Choice Hotels spent almost \$40 million on domestic ads through the first nine months of 2010, per Nielsen. That's almost as much as the client spent during all of last year.

This marks Doner's second tenure with Choice. It won promotions work from the hotelier in 2009. But after a management change, the business was consolidated at Publicis' Leo Burnett in Chicago, which had won the creative work in a pitch. Yet another change of management earlier this year led to a shoot-out between Doner and Burnett for the consolidated assignment.

Choice's properties include Comfort Inn, Quality Inn, Cambria Suites, EconoLodge and Comfort

Suites.

The Harman assignment is global, and will encompass advertising for the company's Harman/Kardon, JBL, Infinity and AKG brands. Harman spends an estimated \$25 million annually on ads worldwide. (Per Nielsen, U.S. spending is about \$5 million.)

For Doner, the recent spate of account wins is especially good news. The agency has gone through [an ownership change and a scandal](#) over a pension fund run by ex-CEO Alan Kalter, ex-creative director John DeCerchio and other former equity holders.

Amid the negative headlines and various account losses, Doner had to lay off 100 employees earlier this year.

The agency is now owned and run by by co-CEOs David DeMuth and Rob Strasberg. The former is a longtime Doner staffer; the latter joined in '08 and also serves as creative chief.

"There is a lot of energy here," said DeMuth. "We have put a lot of things behind us, and our team is focused on a new chapter."

Doner's biggest kick in the pants probably came last June when [Mazda North America fired the shop from its \\$155 million account in favor of Team Detroit](#), which is opening a new dedicated office for the automaker in Irvine, Calif.

Doner created the "Zoom Zoom" positioning for Mazda in the 1990s, a creative strategy it still

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Shortly after getting canned by Mazda, DeMuth and Strasberg wrote a letter to Chrysler CMO Olivier Francois, which led to the shop adding the carmaker's assignment. Doner is also getting a crack at handling Chrysler's national brand advertising in North America, as well as a chance to join Chrysler owner Fiat's roster of agencies in Europe.

Doner is also a finalist in the \$70 million AutoZone review



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