

2005  
 ■ VAUGHAN EMSLEY, SAATCHI & SAATCHI

# Saatchi executive tries to decipher the tea leaves for P&G and Publicis

By JACK NEFF

BELYING HIS LOW-KEY demeanor, his tropical-print shirt, or his sometimes-subversive understated wit, Vaughan Emsley is the account guy on the biggest single creative account on the planet.

As general manager of the Procter & Gamble Co. business at Saatchi & Saatchi, he's also point man on Publicis Groupe's entire creative relationship with the world's biggest marketing spender, including Leo Burnett, Publicis Worldwide, Kaplan Thaler Group and a range of marketing services agencies that includes PR shop Manning Selvage & Lee, Frankel/Arc and Publicis Dialog. The holding company accounts for about 80% of P&G's creative marketing effort.

Mr. Emsley, 46, long pictured himself in a job like this. He just never pictured it quite this way.

"When I started in the [advertising] business in 1981, the people who did these sorts of jobs flew around the world all the time having lunch," he says. "They all lived in hallowed parts of the agency with deep carpets. They all had grey hair and played golf all the time. Unfortunately, I have to work for a living. ... I anticipated pouring drinks and playing golf myself by this time, but it hasn't happened."

A big part of his job is seeing the future, and like most everyone else, he doesn't know what it will be.

"What I'm most concerned about is making sure Publicis Groupe anticipates and is in a position to deliver against P&G marketing needs in the long run," Mr. Emsley says. That said, having taken over the post in September, he's still not quite sure what those future needs are. "The reason is we really don't know what technologies will be in five years' time," he says.

## UNCERTAIN FUTURE

But like his boss, Saatchi CEO Kevin Roberts, Mr. Emsley suspects the future will have lots to do with the store—as in retail marketing—and the screen—as in TV, however it may be viewed in the future.

"To survive, any brand is going to need ... a pretty involved or enticing idea," he says. "If you watch an evening of television, you wouldn't see that in a majority of commercials. ... If you asked where on earth would they take that if they didn't have their 30-second TV spot, the answer is often that they couldn't take it anywhere."

One additional theory from the Cambridge history graduate: journalism and advertising as we know it



CHRIS CASSIDY

## Just Asking

### What's your current bedtime reading?

"A lot about the Crusades [one book on the first, another on the fourth] and why people suddenly decided to leave their castles and hamlets and travel in unbelievably difficult circumstances thousands of miles."

### How's that help with your day job?

"Advertising [often fails to look at] why people decide to do what they do and what ideas can cause people to change. ... The other thing is the growing force of religious sentiment as a political phenomenon in this country. The Crusades interest me as a sign of how that can get mixed up with other things to produce results that were not expected, especially by the devout people who got the whole thing going."

### Did your parents have jobs that let them have long lunches?

"My mother had a mid-level clerical job. My father didn't really work for 30 years. He was quite a journalist, but he didn't seem to produce very much."

are history. Communication of all kinds, he believes, will be a lot more like Jon Stewart and a lot less like Tucker Carlson.

"More under-25-year-olds get their news from [Comedy Central's 'The Daily Show'] than any other source [at least on cable TV]," he says. "[Mr. Stewart] does better than all the hyperventilating blabbermouths. ... [Mr. Stewart] brought down [CNN's]

'Crossfire.' And some people might say a lot of advertising right now is like 'Crossfire.'"

As usual, Mr. Emsley didn't get much time for lunch on a recent afternoon as he was interviewed over carryout sandwiches and chips at his Saatchi, New York, office. He misses lunch as it once was. Part of what attracted him to his first job at London's Ted Bates were long lunches and short Fridays.

"As an agency, it didn't do anything," he says. "It didn't win awards. It didn't win new business. But the camaraderie was enormous and the parties were great and they had real personalities. ... I don't know that the work overall today in the business is better since lunch disappeared."

Many of advertising's edgy personalities are gone, too, he laments. Though he acknowledges Saatchi has "one or two," with a quick glance upstairs toward Mr. Roberts' office.

Mr. Emsley has the credentials to bump heads with even his most cerebral clients at P&G, led by former medieval-history-major-turned Chairman-CEO A.G. Lafley. Account guy or no, bumping heads is exactly what Mr. Roberts expects from him—at times.

After 15 years working on P&G brands, sandwiching a four-year stint at Young & Rubicam in London in the 1990s, Mr. Emsley "really has got the measure and tempo of P&G," Mr. Roberts said.

He adds that Mr. Emsley understands: "There's no living to be made out of pissing them off. And there's no living to be made out of following them blindly, either."