

## WPP Backing 'Hybrid' Digital Start-up Agency True Worldwide

by [Daryna Andriy](#) on June 19th 2010

WPP is backing start-up agency True Worldwide, which bills itself as a "hybrid" agency, combining technology with digital and traditional advertising. True, run by seven partners who come from agencies at rival Publicis Groupe and Omnicom Group, is based in London and Seattle, and plans to open a New York office early next year. WPP has a stake of just less than 50% in the agency. Simon Law, former global lead planner on Hewlett-Packard at Omnicom's Goodby Silverstein & Partners, is one of the founders. He said, "Fundamental to the agency is how to get a better understanding of consumers and their behavior. More and more people use the web to search, purchase, talk; we are building bespoke tools to look at their real lives, observing how search translates into actual behavior online and how many options they really explore. Behavior is more telling than demographic information." Mr. Law said the systems are being built in Seattle by three former VivaKi and Razorfish employees. True Worldwide has already spent a lot of time with WPP's market research division Kantar, looking at how to link the new technology back to more traditional research tools. As well as search monitoring, True Worldwide is focusing on general social listening, trying to determine what conversations consumers are having online and with whom. The goal is to develop tools for faster access to information about the impact of ads and other marketing activities, so agencies can change copy, edit voice-overs, and make other fixes during a campaign, rather than assessing after it ends. For WPP, it's an opportunity to kick-start technologies that the group's agencies might not adopt on their own. "You can't build technology without people using it and actively pushing to get it right," Mr. Law said. "If we succeed with the technology, we can export it across WPP and influence an enormous number of agencies." Besides a New York office, the new agency plans to open elsewhere, including Asia. "We are more urgent about expansion than you'd expect for a small start-up," Mr. Law said. "The technology we are building gives global insights, and we are already speaking to clients who manage global brands. We're not waiting to embed a U.K. presence and then export the culture. Our view is that it's better to open early and let the U.S. define the culture." &nbsp; [About WPP](#) WPP is one of the world's largest communications services groups, employing 138,000 people\* working in over 2,400 offices in 107 countries.&nbsp;