

Coyne Public Relations

CONSUMER MARKETING
AND MEDIA RELATIONS SPECIALIST

Parsippany

It took the best part of a decade for Coyne Public Relations, founded in 1996, to become an overnight success. After laboring largely in obscurity for its first five or six years before a series of blue-chip client wins—Campbell's and Pillsbury were among the first, joined later by Kraft, Shell,

The Walt Disney Company and more—Coyne has enjoyed remarkable 350 percent growth over the past four years and is now firmly established as one of the best consumer public relations firms in the New York area, with a

staff of 90 split between its Parsippany headquarters and a Manhattan satellite office (with 15 people) and fee income in excess of \$8.5 million.

Strangely—or perhaps not—that kind of growth has never been an end in itself. "Our mission is not to be the best agency in America but the best one for work for," says the mission statement at Coyne, which as a result of accomplishing the latter—it has been named the Best Small Agency to Work For by this publication—can now make a plausible case for consideration for the former. "If we are the best place to work, we will attract the best employees," the firm's mission statement explains. "If we have the best employees, we will attract the best clients. If we have the best employees and the best clients, how can we not be the best agency in America?"

The firm continues to rank among the best employers in the public relations industry—it was number three on our list of the Best Midsize Agencies to Work For this year—recognition that is validated by its remarkably low turnover rate (just 9 percent of employees left to pursue other positions in the PR business) and the comments of employees. Respondents to our survey like the fact that there is "no politics, no drama—we are all treated with respect and opinions really matter—and no shitty clients." Says another: "Everybody here gets along and our CEO cares about each of his employees. It's unlike any working environment I have ever been a part of."

The link between the firm's culture and its performance is clear to founder Tom Coyne, and his approach is borne out by the successes of the past 12 months, which brought new clients including Avis Car Rental, Babies R Us, The Container Store, Crayola, The Harlem Globetrotters, Hasbro, Mary Kay, Pepsi, Starwood Hotels & Resorts and the United States Tennis Association—the vast majority of them won in competition with far larger national and multinational competitors. The firm also saw growth from a number of existing clients, including Disney (with the addition of Adventures by Disney), Kraft (new products such as Tazo Tea, Kraft salad dressings, and Capri Sun), Siemens and Shell.

The firm operates in three core practice areas, with the consumer and lifestyle group accounting for close to two-thirds of its revenues. But the firm saw better than 60 percent growth in its healthcare practice, which includes flagship client Medco Health Solutions, last year, and healthcare now accounts for about a quarter of the business. The tech practice is smaller, but is clearly another growth area, and the firm formalized a public affairs group in 2007, while expanding its work in the corporate social responsibility arena with assignments for Hard Rock Cafe, Mary Kay, and Toys R Us. It also introduced a digital practice—with a suite of services including blogging, website design, and podcasting—that has already done interesting work for client such as Disney and Shell.

Highlights of last year's client work included generating media attention surrounding the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament to help reinforce the relationship between client Goodyear and NCAA March Madness. The firm created the "Get There" Blimp Shot Contest, which selected four students representing the schools of the Final Four: Ohio State and gave them an opportunity to shoot a regulation basketball at a hoop measuring 100 feet in diameter while flying 500 feet in the air aboard the Goodyear Blimp. For Disney Parks, meanwhile, Coyne created national consumer awareness for the client's "Year of a Million Dreams" through a partnership with CareerBuilder.com to survey Americans about their dream jobs. Coyne also helped May Kay promote its role as official beauty sponsor of the 2007

Country Music Association Awards to raise awareness of the company's philanthropic activity around the domestic violence issue.

Finally, Coyne brought in several new senior staff in 2007, including vice presidents Chris Brienza, previously executive director of publicity for the Sports Group magazine brands (*Runner's World*, *Bicycling*, *Backpacker* and *Mountain Bike*) at Rodale; Jeff Leopold, formerly senior vice president, director of global communications for Ogilvy Action and senior vice president of strategy & planning at Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide; and Amy Geller Promisel, formerly a PR consultant for Conde Nast Publications, where she

led consumer publicity efforts for the launch of *Cookie*. Also joining, as assistant creative director, was Beth Kimmerling, formerly creative director at Litzky Public Relations, a boutique PR firm specializing in toys.