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Capgemini fits global roots into US efforts

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September 15 2008

To effectively promote its North American businesses – a complex mix of consulting, technology, and outsourcing services – Paris-based Capgemini drew its PR operations under one umbrella in January.

The new unit, North American external communications, was assembled to provide “a one-voice message to the market and to align effectively with all of the other tasks associated with integrated marketing,” says Lisa Boughner, who previously led PR for Capgemini's North American outsourcing business.

With 9,000 employees and accounting for 20% of the company's overall revenues last year, Capgemini's North American operations continue to grow since tripling in 2000 as a result of its Ernst & Young Consulting acquisition. Globally, the company sprawls 36 countries, staffed by more than 86,000 consultants, IT specialists, and outsourcing experts serving the automotive, consumer products, energy, utilities and chemicals, government and manufacturing, and other industries.

“Consolidating [PR operations] in North America means we can now market and sell across the entire portfolio with no constraint, where before we might have had PR from different units operating independently,” Boughner says. “And, we work collaboratively with the global PR teams to make sure that we're presenting an integrated message to global markets.”

The overall external communications mission is to ensure an ongoing presence and share of voice, in order to influence buying behavior by shaping industry issues.

“This objective includes elevating our market and mindshare to levels more closely resembling our European presence and surpassing key competitors,” Boughner says.

For example, the PR team recently launched an initiative to publicize the cost savings and infrastructure benefits of Capgemini's business process outsourcing services in North America – resulting in articles in *Investor's Business Daily*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Bank Technology News*, and other publications.

“Outsourcing is... complicated, and many PR people I deal with have a hard time grasping the basics,” says Beth Ellyn Rosenthal, editor of *Outsourcing Journal*. “But, the PR people at Capgemini... understand the

business and its nuances, sometimes better than I do.”

At Capgemini, the role of external communications is much broader than traditional PR. This expanded role encapsulates message development, thought-leadership planning, securing client references, and media relations, while closely aligning PR with marketing.

“We are responsible for influencing the buying behavior of prospects and clients through an ongoing conversation with influencers,” Boughner says. “Also, we heavily influence the messages our sales and delivery colleagues take to market every day.”

To position Capgemini as a thought leader, the team leverages the company's market research, content from its executives' blogs, and arranges interviews with its industry experts.

“The... executives know that time spent talking to me is time they are not making money,” Rosenthal says. “But it's the PR people who make it happen. They know who I need to talk to, before I need to talk to them, and they get them to behave, which can be difficult.”

Helping the three-person North America external communications team (with a support staffer in Mumbai) is AOR Weber Shandwick.

“[Its] success is due in large part to [its] ability to align marketing functions, which means PR not only supports business goals, [but] also amplifies other marketing efforts,” says Robert Dowling, GM in WS' North American technology practice. “Lisa Boughner has the... task of supporting Capgemini's business leaders across North America, working hand-in-hand with the corporate team in Paris, and staying in lock-step with the global marketing team. In short, she wears a lot of hats. It's a good thing she has the handbags to match.”

Moving forward, Capgemini's PR team is determined to overcome the challenges associated with representing the North American operations of a French company. While the company is widely known throughout business and media communities in Europe, the same cannot be said in North America.

“With every challenge comes an opportunity,” Boughner says. “With our European roots, we have the opportunity to showcase Capgemini as one of few truly global multicultural players in our industry. I never... thought about working in a global environment, but now that I am, I wouldn't want it any other way.”

At a glance

Company: Capgemini

Chairman, CEO: Serge Kampf (Chairman), Paul Hermelin (CEO)

Headquarters: Paris, France

Annual Revenue: 2007 global revenues approximately \$13 billion

Marcomms budget: Undisclosed

Key trade titles: *IndustryWeek*, *Outsourcing Journal*, *Consulting Magazine*

Marcomms team: Chris Williams, CMO; Lisa Boughner, director of North American external comms