

McDonald's Seeks New Spin On 'I'm Lovin' It'

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Looking to refresh its marketing message, McDonald's has tasked three global roster shops to come up with the next expression of "I'm lovin' it," sources said.

The drill began a few months ago and is ongoing, with the shops -- identified by sources as Omnicom Group units DDB and TBWA and Publicis Groupe's Leo Burnett -- conducting market research and developing pitch ideas, sources said. Presentations are slated for late October.

McDonald's declined to discuss specifics of the process but did acknowledge a search for fresh marketing messages in a statement from global chief marketing officer Mary Dillon.

"We're fortunate to have one of the most iconic brand campaigns in the world with 'I'm lovin' it.' Now six years strong, and an invaluable foundation that helps deliver strong business results, it is more effective today than at any point in its history. Our goal is to make it even stronger and more relevant," Dillon said.

What's more, McDonald's seeks to "continually challenge ourselves and our partners to maintain our high levels of world-class marketing and advertising," Dillon said. "That's why we engage our creative talent around the world to help keep our messaging fresh, contemporary and compelling."

The CMO added that "because of the highly competitive nature of marketing we keep our plans confidential. However, we are confident that 'I'm lovin' it' and the brand promise that comes with it, will continue to connect with customers."

McDonald's is said to be seeking a through-the-line approach that incorporates traditional advertising and digital marketing. "The briefing is around 'I'm lovin' it' -- what does it mean [now]?" said a source. "It's really about their next campaign."

In the U.S alone, McDonald's major media spending totaled \$855 million last year and \$534 in the first seven months of 2009, according to Nielsen.

Those figures don't include online spending. A global spend was not immediately available.

It was under Dillon's predecessor, Larry Light, that another global roster shop shootout begat the "I'm lovin' it" theme, which originated out of DDB subsidiary Heye & Partner in Munich, Germany.

The subsequent campaign launched in September 2003, with a spot featuring singer Justin Timberlake.

The latest drill is seen in part as an attempt by Dillon to put her stamp on the fast-food giant's marketing. Before assuming the CMO role in 2005, she was president of PepsiCo's Quaker Foods.

DDB and Leo Burnett work on the brand domestically and abroad and TBWA handles it in overseas markets. The agencies declined to comment.

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