

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S STATEMENT



In 2024 the advertising industry surpassed \$1 trillion in total revenue for the first time in history, as brands continued to invest in marketing services as a core component of their wider strategies.

What we do is not simply important for clients – it's a prerequisite for business success. They look to us to inspire their customers, launch new products, manage their reputations and grow their businesses.

At the same time, the marketing ecosystem is becoming more complex, as channels, platforms and technologies rapidly evolve and proliferate.

So clients are also looking for partners who can help them navigate this complexity, and transform their marketing operations to keep pace with change.

Each of these trends underscores the highly valuable nature of our work, and the opportunities ahead of us.

THE OPPORTUNITY OF AI

The biggest of those opportunities is to be found in the application of artificial intelligence to marketing.

Over the last 25 years, the internet has transformed the business of marketing, and driven our growth as a company. At WPP, we believe that the impact of AI will be equally – if not more – profound.

AI is touching every single aspect of how we work: augmenting our creativity, increasing

the volume of quality content we are able to produce for our clients, unlocking new levels of sophistication and effectiveness in media planning. All at the speed and scale enabled by advanced AI models.

This creates huge potential for WPP, our clients and our shareholders. As well as enhanced creative output, AI promises a step-change in efficiency and productivity, allowing us to deliver more work with the same resources, alongside better outcomes for our clients.

To ensure we realise the opportunity of AI, we have been building on the leadership position we established a number of years ago when we acquired Satalia, the cutting-edge AI technology company, in 2021.

Acting as a hub for AI expertise across the whole of WPP, Satalia has allowed us to build and train state-of-the-art AI models for our clients, and to develop the "Brains" that sit behind our AI-powered marketing operating system, WPP Open.

LEADING THROUGH WPP OPEN

Our investment in WPP Open has differentiated us from our peers and means we now offer clients the industry's most advanced end-to-end marketing platform.

It allows our teams to generate insights, develop strategy, move seamlessly from ideas to near-finished executions, test them against synthetic audiences, plan and activate campaigns, and manage commerce channels through to the point of purchase.



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MARK READ
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

These are just some of the capabilities of WPP Open, and the reason 33,000 of our people were using it each month by the end of 2024 – a figure that continues to grow. Client adoption is also growing, with major brands including Google, IBM, L'Oréal, LVMH, Nestlé and The Coca-Cola Company all seeing the benefits.

WPP Open was central to our biggest pitch successes in 2024, including Amazon, Unilever and Johnson & Johnson, as it becomes increasingly embedded at the heart of our offer and ways of working.

Innovation in the world of AI is happening at a dizzying pace, and to maintain our lead we are increasing our annual investment in WPP Open from £250 million in 2024 to £300 million in 2025.

➔ [Read more about WPP Open and our investment in AI, data and technology from page 18 of this report](#)

INVESTING FOR THE LONG-TERM

During the dotcom boom, when people were trying to figure out whether the internet was an opportunity or a threat, and whether to maintain or pull their investment, those who stayed the course were those who came out on top.

The same will apply in the marketing services industry today. While we can already measure the success of our AI investments in pitch win rates, client adoption and employee uptake, the ultimate yardstick will be top-line growth.

I believe the decisions we are making now will create the foundations for accelerated growth, as we build a stronger WPP for a very different future.

Another critical part of that process has been the streamlining of our once highly complex client-facing structure.

2024 marked the first year of operation of our two newly created agencies: Burson, formed from the merger of BCW and Hill & Knowlton; and VML, which brought together VMLY&R and Wunderman Thompson.

We also continued to simplify GroupM, our largest business, through the consolidation programme announced in 2023, and sold FGS Global, delivering significant value for our shareholders and further sharpening our focus on our core business.

As a result of the changes we have made, today we serve clients primarily through six agency networks – AKQA, Burson, GroupM, Hogarth, Ogilvy and VML – that represent more than 90% of our revenue.

This simpler structure has enabled a stronger, more integrated offer across our creative, production, commerce and media capabilities, supporting an improved new business performance in the second half of 2024, and good growth across our top 25 clients of 2.0% for the full year.

STRONGER MARGIN AND CASH, DESPITE TOP-LINE PRESSURE

It has also helped to make our operations more efficient, contributing to a higher headline operating margin, improved cash conversion and a stronger balance sheet – giving us greater flexibility for the year ahead.

We anticipate that the impact of our structural actions on the top line will be somewhat slower to come through, as we continue to build a platform for stronger growth in the future. It also takes time for new business wins to translate into revenue.

Our top-line performance in 2024 was impacted by the effect of historical client assignment losses, challenging conditions in China and weaker discretionary client spending in the final quarter. Like-for-like revenue less pass-through costs fell by 1.0% for the year.

In these uncertain times we remain cautious on the macro environment. We expect 2025 to be a year of transition for GroupM as a new leadership team implements its plans and laps prior client losses. At the same time, we anticipate a better year for our creative agencies, and that our top-line performance will improve in the second half of 2025.

We expect trading in China to continue to be difficult in the first half of this year, with some improvement later in 2025. The actions taken by the new China management team – including to address GroupM's specific challenges – will build on our leadership position and strengthen our business over the medium-term in what remains an important market for WPP.

[➔ Read more about our financial performance and outlook in the Chief Financial Officer's statement from page 62 of this report](#)

Despite the disappointing end to 2024 and the challenging short-term outlook, we continue to be confident in our medium-term targets. We believe our strategy – described in detail from page 16 – will produce stronger growth and greater value for our shareholders.

PRIORITIES FOR 2025

To achieve this, our priorities for 2025 are to deliver on the promise of WPP Open, to get GroupM in good shape for stronger growth, and to win more pitches through our increasingly integrated proposition to clients.

Our additional investment in WPP Open is designed to keep it at the forefront of AI in our industry, and as we deploy it across the entire company we aim to increase usage to every client-facing role in WPP.

In September we were delighted to welcome Brian Lesser back to WPP as the new CEO of GroupM. Brian was previously Chairman and CEO of InfoSum, a leading marketing data company, and prior to that he led the Xandr advertising business at AT&T.

He spent 10 years at WPP, most recently as CEO of GroupM North America, and was the driving force behind the creation of Xaxis – the agency world's first programmatic buying platform, and probably the first technology-led proprietary media business.

Since rejoining us Brian has put in place a new leadership team at GroupM, which is implementing a comprehensive plan to build on progress to date and improve the competitiveness of our media offer globally, with a particular focus on the US.

Leveraging the full benefit of AI, data and technology at GroupM is key to closing the growth gap with our best-performing peers; further investment in WPP Open's Media Studio and in next-generation proprietary media products will strengthen existing client relationships and drive new business performance.

Across the whole of WPP, pitches in 2024 with WPP Open at the heart had a higher win rate, and in 2025 we aim to make sure there are no pitches without it.

Technology – and AI in particular – is enabling unprecedented levels of connection between previously separate marketing disciplines, allowing us to offer the truly integrated solutions that clients increasingly expect.

Within this, creativity remains more important than ever. Our creative and production capabilities are market-leading and often the decisive factor when clients choose our offer ahead of our peers.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S STATEMENT CONTINUED



THE CREATIVE EXCELLENCE OF OUR PEOPLE AND WHAT THEY DO FOR OUR CLIENTS CONTINUED TO BE RECOGNISED BY THE INDUSTRY IN 2024"

As brands seek partners to help them transform their marketing models, we are well placed to meet this demand, as we are already seeing with our biggest clients. In many ways providing marketing services will become more like providing technology services, with fewer partners, greater standardisation and new commercial models.

And finally, our efforts will be underpinned by more efficient operations and strict capital allocation.

Taken together, these actions will position us to deliver improved growth rates alongside financial stability, against a backdrop of continued economic and geopolitical uncertainty.

CULTURE AND COMPLEXITY

In today's complex world, a pressing question for brands and organisations is whether to engage on social issues in a more contested public arena, and how to navigate the expectations of different audiences with competing views on sensitive topics.

With political events much has changed over the last year. Some things, though, have not changed. At WPP our aim has always been to foster a culture of respect for one another in which everyone feels they belong and has the same opportunities to progress in their careers.

We also believe a workforce that reflects the world around us, and the consumers our clients want to reach, helps us do the best work and is good for business.

Like all companies with operations in the United States, we are monitoring developments and keeping any implications for our business under ongoing review. We will continue to meet legal requirements in all our markets.

SKILLS FOR TODAY, AND THE FUTURE

WPP is a people business, and it is vital that we equip our employees with the skills they need to succeed in a fast-changing world.

In 2024 we expanded the scope of our Future Readiness Academies, our on-demand training platform, adding modules such as advanced AI training to help our people build essential skills in areas like prompt engineering and apply AI in practical, real-world scenarios.

More than 30,000 people have completed over 108,000 Future Readiness Academies lessons, demonstrating the appetite for learning, development and future-facing skills within WPP.

In today's connected ecosystem, we need our people's capabilities to span the full range of technology partners and platforms. In 2024 WPP employees earned more than 21,000 accreditations from technology partners such as Adobe, Google, Meta, Microsoft and TikTok.

One of the most important factors for career and skills development is spending enough time together with colleagues in person. As well as making it easier to learn from one other and mentor those starting out in their careers, it also enables more effective collaboration and stronger culture.

That's why, from April this year, we are asking most of our people to spend an average of four days a week in the office, while continuing to provide additional flexibility for those who need it.

Developing emerging industry talent is a top priority for WPP, and our Creative Tech Apprenticeships are a great example of how we do that. This nine-month paid programme is designed to furnish participants with next-generation skills in AI, creative coding and virtual production.

Apprentices gain hands-on experience with leading brands, and most go on to secure roles with Hogarth, our global production agency – providing a career path for them and a pipeline of talent for WPP.

[➔ Read more on our people strategy from page 42 of this report](#)

OUTSTANDING WORK

Talent remains a vital ingredient of WPP's success, and the outstanding work our clients have come to expect from us.

The creative excellence of our people and what they do for our clients continued to be recognised by the industry in 2024.

We were extremely proud when Unilever was named Creative Marketer of the Year at the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity, due in part to our work for its brands, and when The Coca-Cola Company, whose global marketing partner is our dedicated agency WPP Open X, won Creative Brand of the Year for the first time in its long history.

It was also wonderful to see Ogilvy pick up Creative Network of the Year, while WPP regained the title of Creative Company of the Year and GroupM emerged as the leading media group at the festival.

Another great showcase for the best in our industry is the Super Bowl, which this year once again featured many brilliant examples of our agencies' creative output, while GroupM oversaw 20 different spots on national media.

It's another reminder of the visibility, cultural impact and high-value nature of what we do. Advertisers invest millions of dollars in these moments, as they seek to stand out and make a connection with consumers, and they entrust their brands to us in the process.

Such relationships of trust with the world's leading brands are one of the hallmarks of WPP. Our clients include four of the five most valuable companies in the world (Amazon, Apple, Google and Microsoft) and we partner closely with the fifth (NVIDIA). And in 2024 our net promoter score among our biggest global clients rose to a record high.

As we look ahead to the rest of 2025, we are more determined than ever to deliver for those who rely on our services. My thanks go to our fantastic clients, and to all the talented people at WPP behind the great work we do for them.

Mark Read
Chief Executive Officer
28 March 2025