



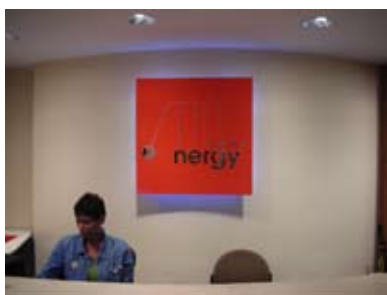
BRETT MCKENZIE
CHIEF WRITER, SBN2

Agency Profile: Energy BBDO

One of the more famous areas of the city of Chicago is a northern stretch of Michigan Avenue called the Magnificent Mile. Here you'll find a number of Chicago's upscale department stores, restaurants and retailers. Many well-known buildings and landmarks are along this strip, including the Water Tower, the John Hancock

Center, the Museum of Contemporary Art and the Chicago Tribune. And right where the Magnificent Mile meets the Chicago River stands the beautiful and historic Wrigley Building. This is where Gary O'Connell of First Light and myself were headed, during our trip to Chicago to host *ihaveanidea's* Portfolio Night IV. For inside the Wrigley Building we'd find the offices of the agency formally known as 'BBDO Chicago', Energy BBDO. What's with the name change anyways?

"Prior to October of last year, our name only identified our location, and didn't say much about who we were," says Linda Waste VP, Creative Services Manager. "It's been a crusade of sorts for Marty Orzio to not be identified as the Chicago office of BBDO. Of course the idea wasn't to become something totally new, but rather to put a name to how we were evolving. The name came about after distilling what we felt we really did well here, which was energize people and energize



Welcome to Energy BBDO.
Please, take a gum or five.

So what makes this 210-person agency unique? Well for one thing, Energy BBDO's tagline might be 'Energize People. Energize Brands', but it's the first time I've seen the creative department have its own tagline, painted ever so lovingly on the creative director's wall. "Kick-ass creative without being an asshole," exclaims Bobby Pawar, Group Creative Director. "Quite a few agencies out there do great work, but aren't necessarily great environments

to work in. There's lots of internal conflict, backstabbing, long, stressful hours into the night, and these problems tend to be overlooked because the final work is good. Here we strive to do wonderful work, but still be nice to each other and go home with a smile at the end of the day."

To keep everybody smiling, Energy BBDO's creative department is kept

relatively small and maneuverable, with everyone given a significant level of responsibility in order to get projects done. This means there's always some sort of hustle and bustle in the department, as everyone tries to live up to that responsibility. "There's a genuine sense of excitement when you realize that each person here is given the power to affect change," says Frank Dattaloe, CD/Art Director. "Especially amongst the juniors. We have a team here that we recently

hired, straight out of ad school, whose first assignment was shooting a million dollar TV spot. That's the power to affect change, and that makes you feel really valued as an

employee." But before all you students start running over to the Wrigley Building with visions of television commercials dancing in your head, Frank is quick to add that not every assignment is fabulous. "Don't get me wrong, new guys still get a lot of less than glamorous projects, but there are always opportunities for them to do amazing work." Adds Linda, "after all is said and done, we aim to have every single creative be able to say at the end of the year 'I've got that on my reel, I've got that in my book, I've done this web project.' We want everybody to feel proud of what they've accomplished and to feel ownership over what they've done."

Integration has been a catchphrase thrown about the advertising world for



The main reception area on the creative floor.



The real reason for the new agency name and logo was to justify purchasing an extra, extra, extra large metal ball desk thingie.

a number of years now. For a campaign to truly stretch across all available media, general advertising can't be kept too separate from interactive departments. At Energy BBDO, the interactive division is fully embedded in the creative department. "When I came to BBDO," says Sean Donohue, Online Creative Director, "I didn't come here to start my own little interactive fiefdom in the corner on another floor, I came to work right alongside the creatives as one team." The interactive people are also brought into the initial stages of almost



Warning: Canadians At Work. Fellow Canucks Jay Gundzik and Pam Fraser (whom I met last year at Portfolio Night in Vancouver) along with Juan Perez, Group Creative Director.



Ah, the staple of any good agency.

every creative brief. "It's not like the art director and copywriter go off and come up with an idea, then go to the interactive people and say 'hey, can you execute this for us?'" says Linda. "When the interactive people are involved from the beginning, the idea comes first, not the medium. It's not 'here's a TV campaign, and here's how it might work online,' but rather 'here's an idea, and if that idea works best interactively, and doesn't involve television at all, so be it.'"

Sounds like one big, happy family, but how is that family when the whistle blows and everyone slides down their brontosaurus cranes? "You'd be hard pressed to find people in this department after 7:00 PM," replies Frank. "After that, we all go off and do our own thing. I mean, we laugh and shoot the shit with each other all day long, so we don't have to do it after hours. I know people at other agencies where their social life is simply an extension of their work life. The only people they know are the people from their work because they spend every waking minute with them. They have very few friends, and more importantly very few creative influences outside the walls of their agencies. That's unhealthy." Todd Hoffman, Group Creative Director agrees. "You don't need to be around your coworkers 'til all hours of the night to come up with great ideas. If you come up with one fucking idea, good, bad or indiffer-



You can visit a hundred different agencies in a hundred different cities, but the mount room will always be eerily similar.

ent, while sitting with your co-workers at the office between 10:00 PM and 1:00 AM, it's a miracle. And the next morning that idea will be crap. But how many times have you been out doing something else, having a beer with old friends that have nothing to do with advertising, and out of the blue an idea hits you and you jot it down on a napkin? You don't have to be with ad people to have great ad ideas."

That said, the creatives were in full agreement that there isn't anybody in their department that they wouldn't enjoy a beer with at the end of the day. And of course, when the holidays come, there is always the annual Christmas party and an agency-wide potluck Thanksgiving feast to bring everyone together in a "talk about anything but work" environment.



The office of Energy's Master and Commander, Marty Orzio.

If there's one thing I could say that wasn't appealing about our trip to Energy BBDO was the drabness of some of the corridors. This can often be the case when you're a tenant



When the people at Energy BBDO receive press, accolades or just do cool things (which is often) it all goes up on this big magnetic chalkboard.

in a large office building with rules to follow, and there are even more rules when your office building also happens to be a historical landmark that probably wouldn't allow you to install an inter-department waterslide. Even with these décor 'rules', there's an effort at Energy BBDO to transfer the creativity of the people and the work into the beige walls that surround them. "Last year the creatives started a 'Say Nope

to Taupe' initiative," says Linda, referring to the Wrigley Building's 'official' wall color. Since then, the creative department has undergone a transformation, gutting areas that can be gutted (including, I'm told, the corporate looking conference room where my meeting with the Energy gang took place), and magnetic chalkboard paint is everywhere, allowing people to not only post up work they've done, but artwork, articles, anything anybody thinks is cool. The wall outside of Marty's office is dedicated to posting up all sorts of upcoming events and happenings in the city, from art exhibits to hot music acts (a number of Energy BBDO people actually play in their own bands after hours.) And everywhere you look, there are photos of everyone having fun. "Right now, pictures from the Clios and Cannes adorn the walls," says Linda in a recent update.

Thanks to Linda, Bobby, Frank, Sean, Todd, Abby and everyone else at Energy BBDO for giving us look inside your world.