

Agency Business Report 2023: Hunter

Years of ‘bananas growth’ culminated in the agency surpassing the \$50 million mark for the first time in 2022.

Words PRWeek staff

PRWeek Agency Business Report 2023

Hunter



Principals: Grace Leong, CEO (pictured); Gigi Garcia Russo, chief growth officer

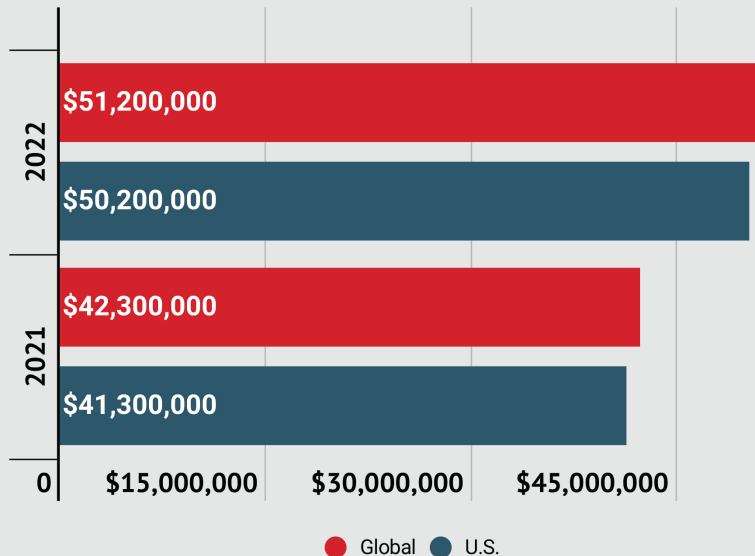
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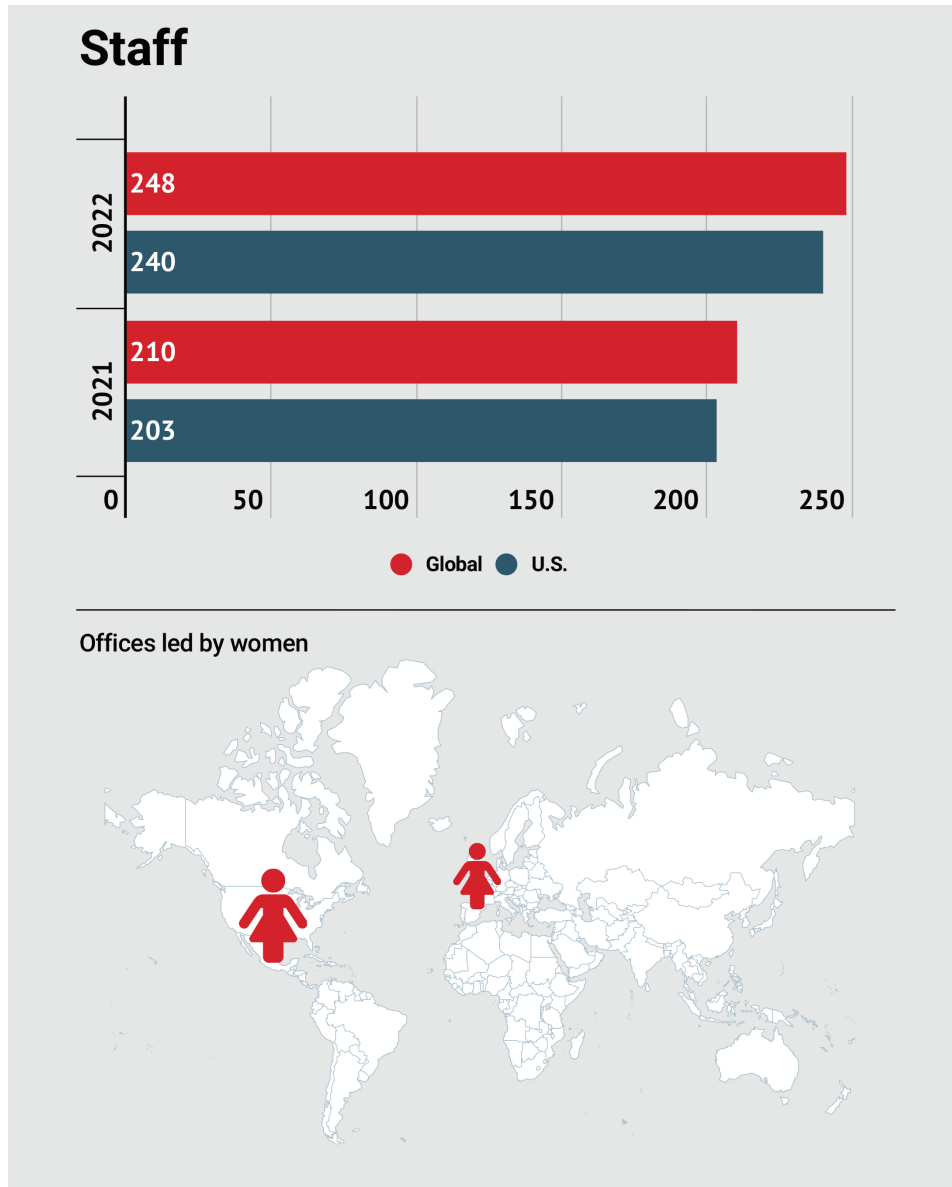
Inspirational quote

“Pressure is a privilege – it only comes to those who earn it.”

– Billie Jean King

Revenue





“While we will always be grounded in the traditional practice of comms strategy and media relations, PR practitioners have a lot more tools in the box for earning positive consumer attention and corporate reputation today.”

— Grace Leong, CEO

“Absolutely bananas growth.”

That’s how Hunter CEO Grace Leong describes the agency’s last three years, during which it essentially doubled in terms of fee revenue. In 2022, Hunter’s revenue jumped 21.5% to \$50.2 million in the U.S., increasing 21% globally to \$51.2 million.

The groundwork for last year’s success was laid in late 2021, Leong explains, when the agency restructured its leadership team to integrate key services such as social, digital and influencer marketing into each practice area.

“While we will always be grounded in the traditional practice of comms strategy and media relations, PR practitioners have a lot more tools in the box for earning positive consumer attention and corporate reputation today,” Leong explains.

The reorganization yielded great results in 2022. Hunter achieved 25% year-over-year revenue growth from social and digital media, bringing on 18 new hires in the aforementioned areas.

The firm invested heavily in recruitment across the board, increasing its headcount 18% to 248 staffers, including eight boomerangs, Leong notes.

“[We] have an intense focus on making sure we have a healthy, productive, supportive and diverse culture,” Leong says. “If the work is going to be hard, you have to make sure the culture supports people.”

A truly healthy workplace environment recognizes the importance of inclusion.

Hunter published its first official DE&I statement in October, outlining its commitment to diversifying recruitment; measuring and reporting progress to staff and the industry; and instituting partnerships and supporting local community organizations, including the launch of a supplier diversity tracking platform.

“Diversity has always been core to Hunter’s DNA,” Leong says, referencing the decision of eponymous agency founder Barbara Hunter to launch despite being unable at the time, as a woman, to get a bank loan by herself.

Key U.S. account wins included comms work for Newman’s Own, consumer-facing media relations for Ulta Beauty, social media support for Sparkling Ice and an expansion with client Wyndham Rewards to include PR.

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Above: Hunter helped host a celebratory launch event for Amazon and Rivian’s electric delivery vehicle in July that was attended by top media, influencers and others.

Secret sauce

Hunter frequently picks up broader responsibilities after beginning a client relationship with more specific duties, such as its partnership with Wyndham Rewards.

“We’ll take a small piece and then we can expand within the company,” Leong adds. “That’s our secret sauce.”

One of Hunter’s standout campaigns was the highly anticipated rollout of Amazon and Rivian’s electric delivery vehicle (EDV) in July. The firm helped host a celebratory launch event at an Amazon delivery station, attended by top media, city and state officials, industry analysts, influencers, employees and Amazon delivery partners.

It also offered embargoed executive interviews, onsite tours for media, policymakers and influencers, and amplified social content to produce more than 450 positive media placements, leading to widespread awareness and positive reception for Amazon’s decarbonization progress.

This year, Hunter plans to invest in healthcare, crisis and risk management and digital content production. The challenge, Leong notes, is capitalizing on PR’s newfound indispensableness.

“Communications services have never been more in demand. The challenge for all of us is, ‘how do we grab it?’” she says. “I’m not just talking about making more money, it’s about increasing reputation. If we have the energy and the stamina, we’ll win.” ●