

Select Resources President Joins Year-Old Consultancy

Russel Wohlwerth Becomes Partner at A-Team Advertising



By [Alice Z. Cuneo](#) Published: July 24, 2006

SAN FRANCISCO (AdAge.com) -- The president of agency matchmaker Select Resources International, Russel Wohlwerth, is joining year-old consultancy A-Team Advertising Advisors as partner.

Mr. Wohlwerth, a 30% partner in Select Resources, said he "sold back" his stock, effectively dissolving his six-year partnership with the consultancy's CEO and primary shareholder, Catherine Bension, with whom he had been in arbitration. Mr. Wohlwerth described the split as "very amicable."

High-profile searches

Mr. Wohlwerth conducted a number of high-profile agency searches for marketers including Intel, BMW of North America, Sony and Washington Mutual. Currently, Ms. Bension, who continues to run the SRI, is leading the highest-profile review of the year, for Wal-Mart and its \$578 million account, in addition to a number of smaller pitches, such as the \$50 million XM Satellite review.

Mr. Wohlwerth, 51, joins a consultancy formed by Bill Nicholson, former exec VP, American Association of Advertising Agencies; Ann Billock, a former exec VP at Roth Associates, a national agency review

firm; Jerry Gibbons, former exec VP of the 4A's western region and its agency relations and membership division; and Peter Gerritsen, co-founder of ad agency Allen & Gerritsen.

Since its inception in spring 2005, A-Team has conducted searches for Coty Beauty U.S., and the North Dakota Department of Tourism and helped RPA, American Honda Motor Co.'s longtime agency of record, find a Hispanic agency.

The next level

Mr. Wohlwerth said A-Team plans to "blow up search and take it to a totally different level," with plans to offer marketers customized consulting services ranging from simple search solutions to "concierge"-level processes. "Our objective is not to become the volume leader in search."

He said agency search has been "stuck" in a 1990s paradigm focusing on handling reviews, noting that the "template approach is not right." He said that in addition to grappling with the changing media landscape, marketers now have to manage multiple agencies handling multiple disciplines.

Mr. Wohlwerth said the A-Team will eliminate a sore spot on the agency side: pay-for-play. Instead of the traditional "libraries" or membership databases that charge agencies \$5,000 or more to participate in reviews, Mr. Wohlwerth said he is developing a database available free of charge that agencies can access and update independently.

Ms. Bension said Select Resources' practices have evolved over the years since its founding. SRI's agency library has evolved into a subscription-based "agency feedback consulting" service that includes seminars, face time with agencies and discussion of best practices, she said. "It's totally separate from reviews," Ms. Bension said. SRI also has established a "university," offering courses to clients on how to manage agencies.

