

Coronavirus - Buying a Single Version of the Truth

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The UK Column [recently reported](#) a £320 million media buy-in contract awarded to OMD Group, the brief for which was redacted from the publicly available information on the UK government’s Contract Finder website. This represents just 20% of the £1.6 billion in media buy-in contracts the government has awarded to Omnicom since 2018.

Headquartered in Manhattan New York, Omnicom is a global media, marketing and corporate communications holding company. It is currently considered the second largest advertising agency in the world, eclipsed only by WPP.

Omnicom is an advertising giant which specialises in public relations, lobbying, communications strategy, and the planning and purchasing of targeted advertising space. It builds comprehensive media campaigns for its extensive client list. Omnicom heads a [North American-based network](#) of prominent advertising and public relations agencies with a world wide collective reach.

Omnicom has been awarded a number of sizeable contracts by the UK government. These have included a December 2018 [advertising campaign](#) contract for the Cabinet Office, worth up to £184 million, a £119 million October 2020 media buy-in contract with a £230 million extension clause, and a £112 million media contract for the [Ministry of Defence](#).

According to the [Crown Commercial Service](#) (CCS), media buying enables the government to:

buy media channels (for example, advertising space, partnerships, events and sponsorship) regionally, nationally and internationally across off and online channels.

Omnicom is the single supplier for these *public relations* campaigns and their UK OMD Group operations are run by [Manning Gottlieb OMD](#) (MG-OMD).

Manning Gottlieb OMD was [dissolved in 2011](#) and struck off the companies register. It isn’t entirely clear, therefore, what the current legal status of MG-OMD is. Their website appears to be their only visible presence and it does not clarify their status. However the CCS has stated that MG-OMD is a division of OMD Group Ltd.

The CCS claim there are a number of advantages to be gained by having one US multinational corporation overseeing the UK government's entire communication strategy, including *robust pricing*, *neutrality* and *transparency*. Putting aside Omnicom's obvious monopoly, as mentioned above, when the UK Column looked at the client brief for the recent £320 million media *buy-in*, it was entirely redacted. We might question the CCS notion of *transparency*.

Who is the dominant partner in this arrangement?

Media buying is the process of acquiring space on media platforms (online and offline) to get a PR message out. In this case the UK government is the client and MG-OMD (Omnicom) is the sole supplier, often referred to as the *Agent*.

The supplier (Agent) is largely responsible for conducting market research and devising campaigns that will deliver best value to the client. They are given a brief and then advise the client how they can achieve the client's PR objectives.

As we have stated, it is not possible to examine the brief for the most recent contract. But [the brief is available](#) for the £112 million MoD contract. It raises some concerns.

Omnicom will *agree* the key performance indicators by which the efficacy of their campaigns are measured; they will evaluate and measure *campaign performance* and will be *proactive and innovative*; the Agent has the *expertise* to advise how to deliver *all aspects* of the service and it is MG-OMD (Omnicom) who deploy resources, implement the plan and *collect* and *store* the data generated by their PR campaigns on the client's (MoD's) behalf.

It seems that Omnicom, in the guise of MG-OMD, not only agrees what constitutes campaign efficacy, they plan, resource and operate the UK government's communications strategy. It is not unreasonable to suggest that Omnicom is leading this process.

In 2018 the UK government awarded a four year [£800 million contract](#) to Omnicom's *OMD Group* for *media buy-ins*. The CCS stated that the purpose of the contract was to:

Provide the best possible outcomes for communication campaigns ... The successful media buying agency ... will work in partnership ... to deliver ... fully integrated campaigns for government.

This contract is set to expire in May 2022.

Omnicom were running government PR campaigns when the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared a global Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020.

In an effort to maintain *transparency*, the signatories to the contract have been redacted as have the pricing criteria, Omnicom *protected* confidential commercial information and much of the Framework Agreement. However, the [contract brief stated](#):

The Government Communication Plan is updated annually and CCS shall ensure that the Agency is notified when the plan is updated ... The Agency will (if required) co-operate and work with agencies on any of the other Crown Commercial Service agreements. This includes other Framework Agencies ... provision of specific single services and products including media planning and Campaign Solutions ... The Agency shall manage and deliver fully integrated campaigns, either by delivering services in-

house or through Sub-Contracts.

Omnicom was in place, ready and able to adapt to the UK government's communication plans as they emerged.

Providing a "single version of the truth"

Omnicom was awarded the contract on 21st May 2018. On the 9th June (less than three weeks later), then UK Prime Minister Theresa May announced that the G7 had agreed to her [Rapid Response Mechanism](#). Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK, the US and the EU agreed that they would *assert a common narrative*.

Omnicom responded almost immediately.

In early 2019 they launched their [Learn Fast & Act Fast](#) communications strategy. This was perfect for the Rapid Response Mechanism needs of their clients.

As the Covid-19 pandemic unfolded, Omnicom was able to help the UK government to "*navigate the road to a new normal*." They said they had deepened their "*rapid response capabilities*" which enabled their client, the UK government, to make "*more informed decisions while providing a single version of the truth*."

With operations in all of the G7 countries, and in both [Russia](#) and [China](#), where they are *discovering new opportunities for growth*, Omnicom is well placed to *deliver fully integrated campaigns*. Whenever a rapid response is required to assert the common G7 narrative, Omnicom will provide the approved *single version of the truth*.

In September 2019, three months after the Rapid Response Mechanism announcement, the BBC convened the [Trusted News Summit](#). To aid *transparency*, then [BBC Director General Tony Hall](#) said that the meeting was held behind closed doors. The BBC effectively formed a global media cartel with the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), Facebook, the Financial Times, First Draft, Google, The Hindu, The Wall Street Journal, AFP, CBC/Radio-Canada, Microsoft, Reuters and Twitter.

Less than two weeks after the WHO declared the global pandemic, the UK government's Scientific Advisory Group in Emergencies (SAGE) [issued some key advice](#). They outlined how our behaviour could be changed to ensure it was in line with the *single version of the truth*.

SPI-B (SAGE's behaviour change experts) stated:

Guidance now needs to be reformulated to be behaviourally specific ... A substantial number of people still do not feel sufficiently personally threatened. The perceived level of personal threat needs to be increased among those who are complacent, using hard-hitting emotional messaging ... Messaging needs to emphasise and explain the duty to protect others ... Consideration should be given to use of social disapproval.

SPI-B recommended that the UK government should:

1. Use the media (MSM) to increase sense of personal threat.
2. Use the media (MSM) to increase sense of responsibility to others.
3. Use social disapproval for failure to comply.

A free, plural and independent media could not be “used” to terrorise the population in this fashion. Only a controlled propaganda machine could possibly be instructed to do so. The *Trusted Newscartel* was available. Omnicom, in the form of MG-OMD, was tasked with using it to do the *hard hitting*.

In doing so Omnicom has been supporting the mainstream media to stay afloat by pumping millions into their failed business models. The taxpayer funded government *buy-ins* [directly finance](#) the UK’s so called *independent* mainstream media. Like the banks, it seems they are *too big to fail*, and so once again the tax payer is being forced to bail them out.

OmniGOV = Fusion Doctrine

MG-OMD has given their propaganda operation the Orwellian sounding name of [OmniGOV](#). They say they are very proud of it and recognise their responsibility as the “*the single cross-HM Government agency partner.*”

OmniGov were behind the *snappy slogans* used to change our behaviour throughout the pandemic. Phrases like “*flatten the curve*”, “*stay home, protect the NHS, save lives*” and “*rule of six*” all rely on a psychological mechanism called the [rule of three](#). The £119 million Omnicom contract to modify our behaviour was in discussion [long before](#) the WHO made their pandemic declaration.

The [hard hitting media campaigns](#) designed to strike fear into the public imagination were OmniGOV public relations strategies. The now notorious “*look into my eyes*” campaign being another [OmniGOV campaign](#).

“*Look into my eyes*” was pure propaganda. The UK government was the client and they wanted to *increase the sense of personal threat* and *use social disapproval* to compel compliance. OmniGOV created a campaign which presented a low mortality disease as some sort of plague. Covid-19 risks primarily affect older people and mortality distribution is [indistinguishable from normal mortality](#).

OmniGOV ignored scientific and statistical evidence and presented a population scale threat that did not exist. They claimed, without evidence, that lockdowns, mask wearing and social distancing could stop the spread of a viral respiratory illness. They misled the public and suggested that *following the rules* would save lives.

The insinuation was clearly that those who did not *obey* were guilty of killing people and that their behaviour was *wrong*. While appearing to advocate social conscience and shared community responsibility the product was baseless fear and social division — as requested by OmniGov’s client.

OmniGOV are also proud of the other projects that have been engaged with during the pandemic. For example, they have been [working with the NHS and Snapchat](#) to encouraging young people to *think differently* about donating their organs, introducing them to the concept of *body-tracking Augmented Reality*.

A Green New Deal

If we ignore the obvious risk of having a single US corporation in apparent control of the UK government’s communication strategy, and if we set aside concerns about the vast sums we have paid them to propagandise us, some may still feel, given the claimed seriousness of

Covid-19, that there is nothing to be concerned about and OmniGOV has acted in good faith.

But for that to be the case, they also have to overlook that the OmniGov led response to Covid-19 is transitioning us into a new global financial and economic model which, at the most senior level, Omnicom has been trying to engineer for years.

Omnicom is not a disinterested third party merely seeking to meet their contractual obligations. They have a significant conflict of interest. The post-Covid-19 recovery they are helping to define is in their interest, not ours.

The Chairman and CEO of Omnicom is John D. Wren. His personal [Omnicom bio](#) reads:

Mr. Wren was part of the team that created Omnicom Group in 1986. Mr. Wren is a member of the International Business Council of the World Economic Forum and is active in a number of philanthropic endeavors.

In 2012, Wren was a contributor and co-author of the World Economic Forum's publication [More with Less: Scaling Sustainable Consumption and Resource Efficiency](#). The report stated:

The need for rapid action to shift towards a resource-efficient economy is high ... change is now urgently required at scale and greater pace than current initiatives, policies or strategies are likely to achieve ... Business can catalyse scale through transforming interactions with citizens.. and playing an active role in shaping the policies and investments that define the rules of the game ... The right rules of the game can catalyse citizen behaviour ... and create new markets ... The private sector needs to be involved in most phases of policy-making ... such collaboration should be forged as a productive adjunct to more traditional inter-governmental arrangements.

Omnicom is undoubtedly delighted that the public private partnership they have forged with the UK, and many other governments, has allowed them to help *define the rules of the game*. Certainly they have been busy *catalysing citizen behaviour* and seem to be fully *involved in most phases of policy making*.

In 2020 the WEF's International Business Council (IBC), with Wren as a member, released their [Measuring Stakeholder Capitalism](#) report.

Speaking about the need to shape the recovery, they noted that the global pandemic was a fantastic opportunity. They wrote:

We must mobilize all constituencies of our global society to work together and seize this historic opportunity ... The principles of stakeholder capitalism, championed by the World Economic Forum ... have never been so important. In 2017, the IBC spearheaded a commitment from more than 140 CEOs to align their corporate values and strategies with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) ... The IBC has been leading the way in this initiative to deliver on the promise of stakeholder capitalism.

With the UK contingent of the *Trusted News* cartel being supported by OmniGOV, tax-avoidant members like Google can look forward to some tax payer subsidised profits. They will be free, alongside Omnicom, to spread the *single version of the truth* in line with the G7's wishes.

This is *stakeholder capitalism* in operation. It has nothing to do with us; we merely pay for it. Nor will we be allowed to object or even question the asserted *common narrative*.

Dissent will not be tolerated

The UK Digital Secretary, Oliver Dowden, recently convened a meeting of G7 technology ministers who signed a [ministerial declaration](#) on “*Internet safety principles*.” The declaration was based upon the UK’s [Online Harms](#) white paper and, as such, there is no specific definition of “*harm*.” It simply means whatever the G7, the *Trusted News* cartel and other stakeholders like Omnicom want it to mean.

The G7 commit to “*work together towards a trusted, values-driven digital ecosystem*.” They declare:

Our collective recovery from COVID-19 must be rooted in a desire to build back better. Leaders ... signed a declaration containing a series of shared principles on how to tackle the global challenge of online safety, including that online firms should have systems and processes in place to reduce illegal and harmful activity.

As the UK government is contractually obliged to update Omnicom on their communications strategy, and seeing as OmniGOV are their sole media campaign managers, the 2020/2021 strategy must have been *agreed* with Omnicom.

Given Omnicom’s long-standing commitment to creating sustainable market opportunities, they presumably welcome the fact that it is [entirely based upon](#) the rule of three with the “*Build Back Better*” slogan at its heart.

Parliamentary Secretary to the Cabinet Office Julie Lopez MP announced that control of government information campaigns will be centralised further. We can only speculate which *stakeholder* partner will win the 2022 contract bid.

In the meantime, practically everything we are told about Covid-19 and the allegedly inescapable global economic and monetary transformation forced upon us, will be fed to us by the *Trusted Newscartel*, guided and financed by OmniGOV. Omnicom and their *stakeholder* partners have a bright future.

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