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ADVERTISING

Avon Comes Calling With a New Campaign

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REMEMBER the perky commercials that began with the ringing of a doorbell followed by the words “[Avon](#) calling”? Now, years later, Avon wants to ring billions of doorbells at the same time with the largest campaign in its 121-year history.



The “Hello tomorrow” ads for Avon are the first work from a new creative agency, Soho Square in New York, part of the WPP Group, which has been developing the campaign since September 2005.

Multimedia



Video
[Avon Ad](#)



Video
[2nd Avon Ad](#)

The campaign, now getting under way, carries the upbeat theme “Hello tomorrow.” The ads are the first work from a new Avon creative agency, Soho Square in New York, part of the [WPP Group](#), which has been developing the campaign since September 2005.

“It was a journey in getting there,” said Elizabeth Smith, executive vice president at Avon Products in New York, who is president for Avon North American and global marketing.

“It was not a matter of, ‘Gee, I love that brand,’ ” she added, explaining what the campaign is meant to accomplish, but rather an effort to express that Avon “is *the* company that best understands and empowers women.”

The campaign seeks to recruit sales representatives to join the more than five million who already work for Avon, as well as to build morale among employees of the company, which recently went through layoffs.

The campaign also has a worldwide scope, in keeping with a recent reorganization of Avon by Andrea Jung, its

chief executive, to make more decisions along global lines in areas like marketing.

To reflect the ambitious nature of the campaign, Avon plans to increase ad spending this year to \$340 million, compared with \$250 million in 2006 and \$135 million in 2005.

“We feel wonderful about the message,” Ms. Smith said, “and we’re backing it up with the dollars.”

A marketing expert said that the campaign might still fall short.

“The issue remains as to whether Ms. Jung can use this effort to enthuse and energize her five million sales representatives,” said Peter Sealey, a former marketing executive for companies like [Coca-Cola](#).

“Maybe she can rally the troops,” said Mr. Sealey, who is adjunct professor of marketing at the Drucker School of Management at Claremont Graduate University, but he said the real issue was what he called a conflict between relying on a sales force and embracing the opportunity to sell in a more “pervasive and personal” way, through the Internet.

The campaign has an online component, at [avon.com](#), where Avon has been selling products for the last decade, along with television commercials, print advertisements and brochures.

There is also a cause-marketing element. Avon is founding a Hello Tomorrow Fund and pledges to donate money through it to organizations in 18 countries that help women in areas like business development and community service.

The campaign has a broader reach than the sales force and company employees, Ms. Smith said. It is also intended to burnish the Avon brand image among consumers as well as help sell Avon products like lipsticks, skin lotions, fragrances and moisturizers.

“Avon is one of those classic brands that everyone knows,” said Nicola Bell, client services director at Soho Square, “but they’ve come to a point in time when they needed to re-energize the brand across all audiences.”

After research by the agency determined that Avon had to “look for a more fresh, contemporary expression of its values in terms of empowering and supporting women,” Ms. Bell said, a decision was made to speak in an optimistic tone as epitomized by the “Hello tomorrow” theme.

“The category is full of advertising that can sometimes make women feel a little guilty about the way they look and be a bit judgmental,” Ms. Bell said. “We’re saying, ‘Look to the future with optimism, look at aging with confidence.’”

The idea that a women’s beauty and skin care brand can take a positive approach, in contrast to the typical pitch for the category, is gaining popularity. For example, a sibling agency of Soho Square, Ogilvy & Mather Worldwide, has been lauded for ads for the Dove brand sold by [Unilever](#), which can be seen online at Web sites that include [dove.com](#) and [campaignforrealbeauty.com](#).

The initial two commercials in the Avon campaign, looking to recruit sales representatives, feature actual saleswomen, the company says. In one spot, the women are extremely enthusiastic, making statements like “I love my job,” “I love the fact that Avon sells itself” and “Anyone can do this.”

In the other spot, the tone is more measured. The saleswomen make statements like “We do business online now.” One praises Avon for introducing “new products that fit into your life, not the other way around.” Another describes how the money she makes helps put her children through college.

Ms. Smith said the two points of view were deliberate, to appeal to different types of prospective sales representatives.

“Some people have more pragmatic reasons,” she added, and “some have more entrepreneurial vision.”

The commercials, as well as the rest of the campaign, were tested in Avon markets, including Brazil, China and

Poland, Ms. Smith said, and “to a country it worked on the same emotional level.”

The campaign is at least the third recent effort for a marketer that uses “Hello” as a welcoming word.

The minitrend may have started with ads last summer for Level vodka, sold by V&S Vin & Sprit, which carry the headline “Hello delicious.”

Next came a commercial for the [Apple](#) iPhone, which began appearing during the Academy Awards show on Feb. 25. The spot features snippets from movies and TV shows in which stars like Marilyn Monroe, Jackie Gleason and Robert Redford answer the telephone. The commercial, which can also be watched on [apple.com](#), ends with the words “Hello” and “Coming in June” onscreen.

Typically, such convergence is coincidental, according to a leading Madison Avenue creative executive, who said it could be difficult to trace sources of inspiration.

“Maybe it’s the planets,” said Sal DeVito, creative director at DeVito/Verdi, known for campaigns for advertisers like Daffy’s, Legal Sea Foods and New York magazine. “It’s happened to us a few times.”