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TODAY'S BRANDS ARE IN DANGER OF 'GENERICIZING' JWT Examines a Key Marketing Challenge of the Great Recession

NEW YORK, June 12, 2009 — Marketers must evolve how they handle short-term selling tactics—a primary focus of brand activity during this recession—or they risk their brands becoming generic, according to the latest white paper from JWT, one of the largest advertising agencies in the world.

The white paper, “The Genericizing of Brands,” emerged out of JWT’s research on consumer and brand response to the global recession in the first quarter of 2009. JWT monitored more than 100 brand tactics and found that price and value messaging dominate.

As JWT points out, such short-term tactics have historically been considered a generic, low-level marketing practice, and normal branding rules have not applied. While that may have worked well enough during flush times—when larger branding efforts acted as a halo and compensated for generic activity—today all communications must incorporate brand-building.

“This is not another argument for maintaining or increasing marketing spend during a recession,” says Guy Murphy, JWT Global Planning Director. “We understand the business realities that prevent brands from doing so. Instead, this is an argument for applying branding principals to short-term selling activity. The challenge for marketers is to develop branding skills in what, for the most part, has been an unbranded arena. If they don’t, brands can easily become more generic at a time when emphasizing their uniqueness is most essential.”

“The Genericizing of Brands” provides key recommendations on how marketers can make branded tactics as important as brand strategy.

This white paper is based on JWT’s research and trends analysis on consumer and brand response to recession-related anxiety. That research, as well as the white paper, can be downloaded from JWT’s AnxietyIndex.com.

ABOUT THE JWT ANXIETY INDEX

JWT launched the AnxietyIndex in February 2003 during the run-up to the war in Iraq. It tracks the level and intensity of consumer anxiety and, importantly, the drivers of anxiety, including safety and security concerns—the threat of terrorism, potential and current military hostilities, crime, etc.—and economic worries, such as the cost of health care, the cost of living and job security. The AnxietyIndex is designed to uncover consumer insights that can help inform strategies for marketing during times of high or low anxiety.

About JWT

JWT is the world’s best-known marketing communications brand. Headquartered in New York, JWT is a true global network, with more than 200 offices in over 90 countries employing nearly 10,000 marketing professionals.

JWT consistently ranks among the top agency networks in the world and continues its dominant presence in the industry by staying on the leading edge—from producing the first-ever TV commercial in 1939 to developing award-winning branded content for brands such as Freixenet, Ford and HSBC.

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JWT's pioneering spirit enables the agency to forge deep relationships with clients including Bayer, Cadbury, Diageo, DTC, Ford, HSBC, Johnson & Johnson, Kellogg's, Kimberly-Clark, Kraft, Nestlé, Nokia, Rolex, Schick, Shell, Unilever, Vodafone and many others. JWT's parent company is WPP (NASDAQ: WPPGY).

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