Ex-MediaCom Chairman & CEO Stephen Allan Joins Brainlabs

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In a stunning coup for the independent digital media agency, Steve Allan has returned to the media landscape which he has helped to define over 38 years. He joins Brainlabs as Executive Chairman in a full-time appointment to help the agency go from budding international player to number one in the world.

Steve's Career Highlights

Allan was part of a wave of UK agency pioneers who helped to develop media planning and buying as a stand-alone discipline in the 1980s and 1990s, when media agency entrepreneurs broke away from creative shops and went on to turn them into global networks. He joined The Media Business, an independent shop which listed on the London Stock Exchange in 1995 before being acquired by NASDAQ quoted Grey Inc. in 1999. During the following three years under Steve's leadership, MediaCom UK became the largest media agency and the first to bill over £1billion. Grey/MediaCom was sold to WPP in 2004 and shortly after Steve established GroupM UK as its first CEO. In 2008 Steve returned to MediaCom as its Worldwide Chairman & CEO transforming it into one of the world's largest and most awarded media networks with over $30 billion in annual billings, employing over 8,000 staff and serving global clients including Adidas, Coca-Cola, Dell, Mars, Procter & Gamble, Shell, Sky and Uber.

Brainlabs was founded in 2012 by former Googler Daniel Gilbert in his parents' attic, rising astronomically over 10 years to be among the fastest growing agencies in recent history. A uniquely scientific and data-driven approach to media has helped its clients win in the digital arena and in turn propel Brainlabs into a 600-strong agency. In March 2021 it was named #1 digital agency by its peers in The Drum's 2021 census.

Steve on his appointment, Daniel and Brainlabs:

"I am incredibly excited and proud to be joining Brainlabs as its Executive Chairman. They are a leading digital agency who have proven themselves to be a formidable competitor. They have world class people and capabilities which merit a world stage. I'm looking forward to taking all I've learned over the past 38 years and helping develop our proposition to be even more enticing for global clients and to open Brainlabs all over the world. Our industry is shaping up to see a huge disruption over the next 10 years and Brainlabs is perfectly poised to capitalise on the upcoming changes.

"In many ways this opportunity feels like I'm going back to my roots by once again becoming a (co) owner of the business, by working in a faster decision making, less complex structure, and in an agency which is leading a new generation of industry disrupters - just like we did when media independents first emerged."

Steve on Daniel Gilbert:

"I first met Daniel in 2015. He made an immediate and lasting impression on me. Yes, he's one of the brightest people I've ever met, but what I really admired was his entrepreneurial spirit, energy, curiosity, ambition, and crucially his values - which he has embedded into the Brainlabs culture from day one."

Daniel on Steve:

"Steve is the GOAT. It is a true privilege to welcome him to Brainlabs. He is kind, caring, humble and hungry... and a born winner. One day we are going to be number one in the world - and to do that we need to have the best in the world leading us."

Daniel on having a new boss:

"My 'bosses' are, have always been, and always will be our clients. When we win for our clients we win for Brainlabs and all the Brainlabbers whose careers we seek to accelerate. Steve's know-how around global clients will be critical to the next phase of our growth and I cannot wait to learn from him in this and many more areas related to growing an international agency. I have looked up to Steve for many years, not just physically but also as a leader who I wish to emulate as I continue to grow and develop my own skills as CEO of this special business."

Brainlabs is backed by Private Equity company Livingbridge who took a minority stake in 2019 when Brainlabs had 200 staff. With the help of Livingbridge, Brainlabs has made five acquisitions: specialist SEO agency, Distilled, Manchester conversion rate optimisation agency, User Conversion, US-based Hanapin Marketing to supercharge their US growth, Canadian programmatic agency, MediaNet, and most recently, Amazon specialist, Molzi. The agency has a global footprint including offices across Europe, North America and APAC.

Current non-exec Chairman David Rigby will continue in a non-exec role. Allan will become a “significant” shareholder.

www.brainlabsdigital.com

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