

KEEP IT IN THE FAMILY

It has taken Nick Maguire more than a decade, but he now has all of his sons working together to give Maguires that vital edge in these tough times. The Drum crashed into the Maguires circle of trust to find out what makes this agency tick.



Family portraits: images supplied by Nick Maguires grandchildren (l-r) Stephen Maguire by Freya (6), Paul Maguire by Theo (2), Chris Maguire by Olivia (10) and Nick Maguire by Julia (7).

It's a sunny September afternoon when The Drum drops in for a coffee and a biscuit at the Charing Cross offices of Glasgow-based integrated communications agency, Maguires.

Sitting in his spacious office, close to the hustle and bustle of his nearby creative department, is founder of the agency Nick Maguire, who looks relaxed and at home in his surroundings. That said, it's little wonder he feels at home after finally slotting in to place the final piece of the Maguires jigsaw, which sees his eldest son, Paul, joining the fold to work alongside himself and his two other sons, financial director Stephen, with whom Nick founded the business in 1997, and Chris, who joined his father's creative team in 2003. And with wife Margaret also lending a hand, it really is now a family affair at Maguires.

SCOTLAND WITH STYLE

In these tough times it seems that blood really is thicker than water as Maguires, which now numbers 10 staff in total and is perhaps best known for creating the

Glasgow: Scotland with Style campaign, bucks the gloomy economic trend by enjoying a positive year, working closely with longstanding clients such as the Glasgow City Marketing Bureau, Babcock Rail, M&D's Scotland's Theme Park, Loch Lomond Golf Club to name a few.

Maguire himself will be well known to most in Scottish advertising after spending a decade working as creative director at Barkers as part of the team that worked for Bank of Scotland, ScottishPower, Bowmore Whisky, Shell et al under the guidance of Robert Bain. In those good old days Barkers was turning over some £28m a year as it pushed forward with its fully integrated model that gave Maguire the scope to exercise his creative juices across a number of areas. But in the mid-Nineties the wheels began to come off the Barkers wagon train and subsequently Maguire quit the agency to go solo. Days after leaving Barkers Maguire was approached by car dealer Ian Skelly to handle his £1m advertising account and alongside his chartered accountant son the new agency of Maguires was born.

Speaking of the family philosophy at the agency, Maguire says: "I suppose it can be difficult to make everything work in a family business, but we seem to have got the mix right here. We do sometimes have stand up fights, but we work it all out. You have to as a family. I strongly feel that unlike some other organisations, family firms are best positioned to ride out the current recession. As part of a family business you can't just jump ship when the going gets tough, you all just roll your sleeves up and knuckle down."

"Family businesses account for about 80% of business in Scotland. If you look at other sectors such as whisky, cars and construction, most of those types of businesses are family run organisations. I'm not aware of too many other marketing agencies that are family run. I know Chris Cole's son works for him, but Maguires is now a real family affair with Paul on board and we really enjoy working together."

"Family firms are also known for treating staff well and being cautious financial investors as we're generally in it for the long term. We definitely make the most of the

family and team work ethos at Maguires among all our team, however not everyone here has the last name Maguire. Our ten-strong team consists of five non-family members who each bring an added dimension to the business - particularly when discussions get heated amongst family members."

JEM DIGITAL

One of the key reasons Paul has joined the family is to spearhead the agency's evolution into the digital arena. Already some 30% of Maguires' business is in digital work, but Paul's appointment comes as the agency launches a dedicated digital division called JEM Digital.

Maguire's eldest son brings with him a wealth of digital experience (and digital awards, including Gold and Silver D&AD's) after an extensive career spent in London's digital sector, specialising in interactive electronic media for public spaces, working with clients such as the Science Museum, Imperial War Museum and the British Music Experience.

Maguire explains the thinking behind JEM Digital: "We

have quietly been growing the digital side of the business and my view is that digital is going to be a big part of our future. I wouldn't like to say all of our future, but certainly a big part of it and having Paul on board will bring us some great experience and skills to add to what we are already doing for clients digitally. We never wanted to go out to buy a digital company. We wanted to do it on our own and build it on our very solid client base."

"Our client base is diverse, but we really are in the market of creating brands. We do a lot of corporate identity work and then we can follow that all the way through with film, direct marketing, digital and so on. We have a small client list of about 20 clients, but what we do is go the full distance with them."

"What I believe makes us different is we really are in the business of delivering results for our clients. I know a lot of agencies say that, but we aim to be a really integral part of our client's business. For instance, we are an integral part of the Glasgow City Marketing Bureau and we work very closely with Scott Taylor and have done since we got that business."

CONFLICTING WORK

"We don't take on any conflicting work. Since doing the Scotland with Style work we have been asked to look at other cities, but I would never do that. I'd probably lose Glasgow if we did that and I'm not daft. For instance, I would rather get more business from the Babcock Group which has grown with us since we did the Babcock Rail rebranding."

And so to the future? Alongside account director Diane Burnett, Maguire is keen to expend his energies in exploring ways the agency can get more work from his current client list rather than stretching things too thin in a constant quest to add new names to that list.

With regards to adding more family members to the team, Maguire has now run out of sons. But there are plenty of grandchildren to bring in as and when the agency needs to be bolstered further.

And, what's more, they have obviously inherited the Maguires creative gene judging from the illustrations above.



The Maguires line-up: (l-r) Nicola Smith, Paul Maguire, Barry McLaughlin, Diane Burnett, Alan Anderson, Nick Maguire, Gary Stevenson, Stephen Maguire, Nicky Crampsey, Margaret Maguire and Paul Maguire.