

Robert L. James
Former Chairman & CEO
McCann Erickson Worldwide

Robert L. James, as chairman and CEO of McCann Erickson Worldwide, led it to become the largest advertising agency in the world. He then remarkably bet the company—at the height of its success—on the belief that globalization would be the future of brands and marketing. Furthermore, he doubled-down, with a strategy that advertising- and not diversification—would lead it.

He showed that while the world was small, globalization would make it even smaller, that advertising would accelerate the process; and out of the shadow of internationalism the striking nature of globalism would emerge. Like the contributions of many in the Hall of Fame, we now take that idea for granted. But it was far from evident at the time.

In 1986, in the face of constant chatter about mergers and acquisitions, James had told a skeptical interviewer, “the game is coming to our arena. It is who we are and what we were founded to be.”

The subsequent growth of McCann Erickson proved his original insight so completely it almost doesn't seem believable today: *In five years the world's largest advertising agency doubled.* And what's more, it did so *organically*, effectively growing 15 percent a year, year over year over year. In the tough business climate of 1992, worldwide billings increased 12 percent. That was the power of delivering globalism.

By 1993, the McCann network had expanded from 65 to 99 countries. It was the number one agency in 16 countries, among the top three in 37 countries, and among the top five in 47 countries. He had accomplished the largely unthinkable: that an agency could have the same quality of management wherever it did business.

The number of global advertising clients in 10 more countries had quadruped, from 10 to 43. In addition, McCann was handling an unheard of (even today) 17 accounts in 30 countries or more. Two years later, when James retired after 10 years as chairman and CEO, McCann was the first agency to have revenues exceeding \$1 billion.

A 25-year veteran of the Interpublic Group, James joined McCann in 1981, at age 44, as vice chairman U.S. operations and four years later was named Worldwide CEO. Prior to joining McCann, he had been vice chairman of Interpublic. Earlier, from 1975 to 1980, he became CEO of the Marschalk Company (now Lowe Worldwide) before he was 40 and trebled its size during his management. His move up through the ranks at Marschalk started in 1968 when he joined the agency as a senior vice president. He began his business career in sales and sales management at Procter & Gamble, moving to product manager at Colgate Palmolive in N.Y., then to Ogilvy & Mather where he was vice president and account supervisor.

He holds an A.B. from Colgate and a M.B.A. from Columbia University. His dedication to the industry is reflected in his contributions to numerous advertising agency groups, including serving as a board member of the Advertising Council, chairman of the 4A's and leading the creation of the Coalition for Brand Equity.

His personal passion for sailing led to his being named Commodore of the New York Yacht Club in 1997. He is the proud winner of a host of national and international yacht racing trophies. He is also a board member of American Cruise Lines.

His many pro bono contributions have included serving on the boards of the South Street Seaport

Museum, The Smithsonian, Operation Sail and the National Captioning Institute. He is a former chairman of the President's Circle of the National Academies of Sciences, a chairman and trustee of the National Air & Space Museum, a trustee and member of the executive committee of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, a trustee of the New York Presbyterian Hospital and a trustee of the World Ship Trust. He supports the institutions from which he graduated having served as a member of the board of Trustees of Fordham Preparatory School, on the National Service Council of Colgate University and on the Alumni Council of the Columbia University Graduate School of Business.

James and his wife Anne are residents of Fort Lauderdale, Fla. and have three children Robert, Jr., Victoria Lincoln and Jeffrey, and seven grandchildren.