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PROI Worldwide Leads \$13.5 Billion Market for Second Year
World PR Report: PROI is largest independent partnership and 5th largest Agency Group

In a global industry estimated to be worth US\$ 13.5 billion, PROI Worldwide continues to lead all integrated communications agencies in rate of growth according to The World PR Report produced by The Holmes Report and The International Communications Consultancy Organisation (ICCO). PROI Worldwide, the world's oldest and leading partnership, stood out with a surge of 17.1% in global net fee income making it the world's fifth largest among global holding groups and the fastest growing integrated communications company. PROI Worldwide's growth rate compared to 8.7% for all independents, 3.5% for publicly owned multi-national firms and 5.3% for the four larger global holding companies.

PROI Worldwide's dramatic 2014 growth follows on the heels of 21.9% growth in 2013 and occurs during a time when it continues to aggressively expand globally through organic growth, new client acquisitions, by growing existing digital, social media and other niche areas and by adding additional offices in existing and new markets.

Commenting on the growth rate of agencies in general, Paul Holmes, Editor of The Holmes Report and one of the world's recognized analysts of communications companies, said "Industry growth in the high single-digits is encouraging; it certainly suggests that public relations continues to grow faster than the overall economy, which is a healthy sign." He added "there is still a sense that PR could—and perhaps should—be doing better. The things PR does well—engagement and relationship-building—are more critical to successful marketing than ever, and PR is doing more: more social media, more content creation, more data and analytics. It ought to be growing more as a result."

Among its ranking of global holding companies, the 2015 World PR Report ranks PROI Worldwide's 75 agencies as 5th in the world, larger than holding groups Publicis, Huntsworth and Havas. Compared to centrally owned multi-nationals, PROI Worldwide ranks third and is larger than FleishmanHillard, Ketchum, MSL Group, Burson Marsteller, Hill + Knowlton Strategies, Ogilvy and Golin. Among global networks of agencies, PROI Worldwide's combined 2014 net fee revenue of more than US\$ 615 million dwarfed Worldcom, its nearest competitor, which reported an increase in fees of 2.6% to US\$ 288 million, IPREX with US \$220 million and Next15's with US \$ 170 million in net fee income.

"PROI Worldwide's growth and marketing strategy has not changed for many years and is a proven formula," says Germany's Andreas Fischer Appelt, Global Chairman of PROI Worldwide and Managing Director of an agency which has 7 offices in Germany, an office in Qatar, and major clients around the world. "Our existing influential and leading edge independent agencies attract other high growth independent agencies which also tend to be the most dynamic agencies in their market and this is reflected in our 2014 growth rate."

"This is certainly the case in APAC Region," states Richard Tsang who chairs PROI Worldwide's Global Development Group in APAC Region and who is Chairman of Hong Kong's largest communications company SPRG Asia which also has offices in China and Taiwan. "Within APAC Region we count the largest agencies in India and Japan as well as large agency groups in Australia and New Zealand in addition to our partner agencies in Korea, Vietnam, Bangladesh and Singapore."

According to New Zealand based PROI Worldwide Director Neil Green, Chief Executive of leading Australasian agency Senate SHJ, the growth in his region is a result of the continued rise of independents against international brands that have gone backwards in Australasia in the past few years. "In addition, the issues and complexities associated with the energy and resources sectors, as well as the continued increase in Chinese investment in both New Zealand and Australia, has given rise to the need for public affairs, IR and community communications to support transactions."

Explaining PROI Worldwide's growth, Allard W. van Veen, Global Managing Director and a Founder of PROI Worldwide says "Clients are the basis for growth but what makes PROI Worldwide unique is that our independent agencies are small, mid-size and very large so we are able to serve the needs of a large and diversified client base." In addition, according to van Veen, PROI Worldwide's strategic growth strategy, positioning and integrated approach allows it to explore, aggressively invest in and add services which lead to accelerated growth and is a factor in PROI Worldwide's rapid growth.

The view that independents can be more nimble is echoed by ICCO Chief Executive Francis Ingham who states the growth of independent firms is impressive and may lead to them overtaking publicly held firms. Ingham explains that independents may not have been as hamstrung by profit targets as publicly held firms and were able to invest in those all-important 'non-traditional services'.

Jean Leopold Schuybroek, PROI's Director, Global Development, heads up the team which travels the globe looking for potential new PROI Partner agencies. He stresses that agencies whose strategic direction includes an integrated approach to services and a global view of the communications industry usually turn out to be the best agencies in a market. "These are the agencies which meet our criteria for growth," says Schuybroek. He added "smart growth requires a thorough understanding of each market and which agencies meet the standards of our brand." Since PROI Worldwide has set a limit of 95 agencies worldwide "we are very selective as we continue to grow to ensure we have the expertise which our clients need in critical markets."

When it comes to growth "clients recognize our competitive edge and positioning in the local market," adds Fischer Appelt. "Rather than dealing with a centrally owned multi-national, they like working with local agency owners who understand their market and who are directly aligned with the agency's bottom line. As a result clients receive top level management attention and are well served."

Addressing the perception that only a centrally owned multinational agency has sufficient staff or experience to handle large global or regional accounts, PROI Worldwide Founder van Veen points out that many of the world's 250 largest agencies are part of PROI Worldwide and a number of PROI agencies have staff of 4-600 people and are either the largest or top-5 agencies in their markets.

The addition of large as well as mid-size agencies is the reason why revenue in his Region accounts for 40% of PROI's global billings says Jeff Altheide, Chairman of PROI Worldwide's Development in the Americas Region and Executive VP of G&S Business Communications in New York.

Responsible for heading up the team that plans PROI Worldwide's future growth, Schuybroek and van Veen say that the partnership will continue to grow by adding agencies but also through organic growth. "The World PR Report placed PROI Partners Adfactors PR in India and PRAP Japan among the top 10 fastest growing agencies in Asia Pacific, US based Finn Partners among the world's 10 fastest growing agencies, and Wellcom in France among Europe's 10 fastest growing agencies."

PROI Worldwide was founded in Europe in 1970 and is the world's first partnership of independent agencies. PROI Worldwide agencies operate globally and regionally through practice groups and agency heads meet and exchange industry information at an annual Global Summit and at Regional Summits in APAC, The Americas and EMEA Regions. Its latest Global Summit was held in Cape Town in April and upcoming Regional Summits are being held later this year in Japan, Costa Rica and Belgium. Its 2016 Global Summit will be held in Atlanta in May, 2016.

The company's board, in addition to Fischer Appelt, include Madan Bahal, Vice-Chairman, APAC Region, Fleur Madden, Vice-Chairman, APAC Region, Jeff Altheide, Vice-Chairman, The Americas Region, Ciro Reis, Vice-Chairman, The Americas Region, Dirk Aarts, Vice-Chairman, EMEA Region, Henning Sverdrup, Vice-Chairman, EMEA Region, Richard Tsang, Allard W. van Veen and Jean Leopold Schuybroek.

About PROI Worldwide

PROI Worldwide is the world's largest partnership of integrated independent communications agencies founded in Europe in 1970. It is represented in more than 110 cities in 50+ countries, with 66 leading independent integrated communications partner companies and more than 4,400 experienced staff servicing 4,850+ clients worldwide. Founded forty-four years ago, PROI Worldwide's combined fee turnover exceeds US\$615m., positioning PROI Worldwide as one of the world's largest independent communications companies.