

A close-up portrait of Bhavana Smith, a woman with dark, wavy hair, smiling. She is wearing a dark blazer and a gold necklace. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be an office or cityscape.

Bhavana Smith appointed Chief Client Officer at MediaCom USA

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Former Accenture Executive returns to the agency world after six years away

It's an all-too-common headline in the ad trade press: agency executive seeking greener pastures leaves for job at top consultancy.

Today, however, MediaCom USA has flipped that familiar script by convincing an Accenture veteran to return to the agency world.

Bhavana Smith joins the WPP media network as chief client officer, effective immediately; she had previously spent more than six years at the management consultancy, most recently in the role of senior manager, digital transformation.

Moving forward, Smith will be responsible for overseeing all of MediaCom's US-based accounts. She reports directly to MediaCom USA CEO Sasha Savic and succeeds Tom Cijffers, who has moved back to the UK after three years to lead the London launch of French data marketing group Artefact as CEO. That company [announced his hire today](#).

Smith told Adweek her time at Accenture allowed her to have “a third-party view” and “get a better perspective on what's important to clients and what can agencies do better.”

So why return to the holding company world now?

“I think, having taken those learnings and reapplied them, [I've] come back to my roots and seen that agencies are still where the action is,” she said, citing MediaCom's “stellar performance” on the new business front over the past year.

And despite arguments that the role of the media agency has [grown more and more commoditised](#), Smith thinks that “if anything, it's more important than ever, given the choices advertisers have to connect [with consumers].” Today, she said, media should lead creative, where the opposite was true when she worked at FCB and Mediavest during the mid-to-late '00s.

In a statement, Savic added, “Consultants have entered the market because brands need smart advice and ideas more than ever before,” describing MediaCom as “best equipped to not only offer that guidance but to put it into action for the benefit of the most ambitious brands in the world.”

Smith's hire also means MediaCom's senior leadership is now more than 50 per cent female for the first time, but she sees that fact as coincidence. “I believe I was hired because of my experience, background and desire to drive change,” she said. “It's just as much about diversity of thought as gender or race.”

Finally, as a veteran of the Accenture organization, Smith is more qualified than most to answer the burning question: Are consultancies a direct threat to media agencies,

especially now that they [offer programmatic buying services](#)?

“No. [Accenture] is not the whole business,” she said. “We continue to manage the majority of the media budget, and we have the team and the talent to deliver on that.”

This story was first published by [Adweek](#)