# Agencies juggle growth and reputational risks as Brainlabs lands Estée Lauder, Havas faces B Lab probe and PHD wins awards



Campaign’s weekly roundup has put three very different agency stories in the spotlight this week: Brainlabs’ high‑profile client appointment and regional hiring, Havas London’s continued presence at the centre of controversy over a major fossil‑fuel account, and PHD’s awards‑led run of form. The selection underlines how commercial momentum, creative recognition and reputational scrutiny are all shaping agency fortunes in the current market. (According to the original report.)

Brainlabs’ recent appointment as media agency of record for The Estée Lauder Companies in the UK and Ireland marks a significant step for the data‑led group into prestige beauty. According to Brainlabs’ announcement, the remit covers planning and buying across search, social, programmatic, display, TV, print, radio and outdoor, and the agency says it will deploy proprietary technology and a digital‑first approach to drive growth for brands including Clinique and MAC. The win sits alongside a series of senior hires and regional expansion moves: the company’s own news feed has highlighted new EMEA growth leadership and other senior appointments as it scales its paid‑media and tech capability. Campaign’s roundup flagged the account as one of the week’s notable agency developments.

Havas London’s inclusion on the same list comes with a very different index of attention. Reporting elsewhere documented that Havas’s surprise appointment to Shell’s global media account in September 2023 provoked a strong backlash from climate campaigners and industry critics, who argued the move was at odds with the group’s stated sustainability commitments. Independent outlets recorded that advocacy groups and some partner organisations publicly severed or reconsidered ties with Havas subsidiaries after the Shell announcement. The fallout has included immediate consequences for partner relationships — a short‑term campaign partnership with an anti‑fossil‑fuel initiative was cancelled after the Shell hire was disclosed — and has prompted a formal review by B Lab, the B Corp certifying body, into whether the Shell work is compatible with Havas agencies’ B Corp status. Havas and Shell issued statements at the time defending the commercial appointment; the controversy nonetheless illustrates how agency client lists can trigger institutional scrutiny and reputational risk.

By contrast, PHD’s recent week was defined by industry plaudits. The network was named Agency Network of the Year at the Festival of Media Global Awards 2024, an accolade that reflected a broad haul of wins across territories and celebrated campaigns such as ‘Pink Sky Thinking’ for Warner Bros alongside work for cultural and charity clients. PHD’s own reports frame the awards as evidence of creative and effectiveness credentials that help underpin new business momentum — the type of recognition Campaign also highlighted in its agency round‑up.

Taken together, the three profiles sketch a sector at once buoyed by major client wins and creative recognition, and increasingly exposed to ethical and certification‑driven scrutiny. Industry watchdogs and campaigning groups have shown they will not hesitate to challenge agency client decisions, and certifying bodies are prepared to open formal inquiries where questions of mission and commercial practice collide. At the same time, agencies such as Brainlabs and PHD are leveraging technology, senior hires and award success to broaden their pitches and win scale briefs — a dynamic that looks set to persist as networks chase growth while navigating reputational headwinds.

### 📌 Reference Map:

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/agencies-agenda-brainlabs-havas-london-phd/1928404)
* Paragraph 2 – [[5]](https://www.brainlabsdigital.com/brainlabs-appointed-as-media-agency-of-record-for-the-estee-lauder-companies-uk-ireland/), [[6]](https://www.brainlabsdigital.com/Blog/page/2/), [[1]](https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/agencies-agenda-brainlabs-havas-london-phd/1928404)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.desmog.com/2023/09/19/havas-wins-shells-media-business/), [[3]](https://www.prweek.com/article/1837943/red-havas-dropped-major-anti-fossil-fuel-campaign-shell-havas-hire), [[4]](https://www.campaignlive.com/article/b-lab-probe-strip-havas-agencies-b-corp-status-shell-win/1858504), [[1]](https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/agencies-agenda-brainlabs-havas-london-phd/1928404)
* Paragraph 4 – [[7]](https://www.phdmedia.com/phd-wins-agency-network-of-the-year-at-fomg/), [[1]](https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/agencies-agenda-brainlabs-havas-london-phd/1928404)
* Paragraph 5 – [[2]](https://www.desmog.com/2023/09/19/havas-wins-shells-media-business/), [[4]](https://www.campaignlive.com/article/b-lab-probe-strip-havas-agencies-b-corp-status-shell-win/1858504), [[5]](https://www.brainlabsdigital.com/brainlabs-appointed-as-media-agency-of-record-for-the-estee-lauder-companies-uk-ireland/), [[6]](https://www.brainlabsdigital.com/Blog/page/2/), [[7]](https://www.phdmedia.com/phd-wins-agency-network-of-the-year-at-fomg/)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/agencies-agenda-brainlabs-havas-london-phd/1928404> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.desmog.com/2023/09/19/havas-wins-shells-media-business/> - This DeSmog report covers Havas’s surprise appointment to Shell’s global media account in September 2023 and the strong backlash from climate campaigners. The piece outlines criticisms from Clean Creatives and other groups who argued Havas’s work for Shell undermines its sustainability claims, noting tensions between Havas’s stated ESG ambitions and representing a major fossil-fuel producer. It summarises Havas and Shell statements to the press, contextualises the controversy with reference to industry watchdogs and the Clean Creatives “F‑List”, and records that some organisations immediately severed or reconsidered ties with Havas subsidiaries following the account announcement.
3. <https://www.prweek.com/article/1837943/red-havas-dropped-major-anti-fossil-fuel-campaign-shell-havas-hire> - This PRWeek story reports that the Fossil Fuel Non‑Proliferation Treaty Initiative (FFNT) terminated its relationship with Red Havas after learning Havas had been appointed to Shell’s media account. The article explains FFNT’s rationale, quoting spokespeople who said the decision reflected principle and coherence with the group’s anti‑fossil‑fuel stance. It details that Red Havas had been pitching for a longer contract with the initiative and that the short‑term project was cancelled immediately on disclosure of the Shell appointment. The piece situates the move within broader industry criticism of agencies working for major oil and gas clients.
4. <https://www.campaignlive.com/article/b-lab-probe-strip-havas-agencies-b-corp-status-shell-win/1858504> - Campaign’s report describes a formal review by B Lab (the B Corp certifying body) into whether Havas’s Shell win breaches its certification requirements. The article explains B Lab’s stated intentions to investigate whether taking on a high‑emissions client undermines compliance with B Corp standards and community values, and summarises the possible outcomes from suspension to revocation. Campaign contextualises the probe with background on prior complaints, the Clean Creatives complaint letter, and reactions within the communications industry. It records statements from B Lab and Havas and outlines the significance of the investigation for other agencies holding or seeking B Corp certification.
5. <https://www.brainlabsdigital.com/brainlabs-appointed-as-media-agency-of-record-for-the-estee-lauder-companies-uk-ireland/> - This Brainlabs announcement describes the agency’s appointment as media agency of record for The Estée Lauder Companies UK & Ireland. It outlines the remit — media planning and buying across search, social, programmatic, display, TV, print, radio and outdoor — and notes Brainlabs will apply its data‑led, digital‑first approach and proprietary tech to drive growth across brands such as Clinique and MAC. The piece quotes Brainlabs’ leadership celebrating the win and explains the account transition from the incumbent, emphasising the strategic importance of the brief and Brainlabs’ ambitions to scale its full‑service offering for major prestige clients.
6. <https://www.brainlabsdigital.com/Blog/page/2/> - The Brainlabs News & Views index page surveys recent company announcements and includes the March 2025 entry announcing Ali Reed’s appointment as Brainlabs EMEA Chief Growth Officer. The index summarises multiple posts — hires, client wins and thought pieces — and provides links to full items, including Reed’s role reporting to the UK CEO and her remit to lead growth activity in the region. The page functions as a rolling news feed for Brainlabs, listing other hires and strategic developments that illustrate the agency’s expansion, recruitment of senior sector talent and evolving service capabilities in paid media and tech.
7. <https://www.phdmedia.com/phd-wins-agency-network-of-the-year-at-fomg/> - This PHD Intelligence news release reports that PHD was named Agency Network of the Year at the Festival of Media Global Awards 2024, detailing an extensive haul of awards across territories. It highlights standout campaigns — including ‘Pink Sky Thinking’ for Warner Bros (The Barbie Movie) and work for the V&A and British Heart Foundation — and notes recognition for creative excellence and campaign impact. The page summarises the network’s global performance, the number and categories of awards won, and places the achievement in the context of PHD’s recent industry accolades and its continued prominence in media creativity and effectiveness.