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CASE STUDY · MARLUC SYNOPSIS

WPP Open AI marketing platform

IMPLEMENTED 2024 ONWARDS · MEDIA AND PUBLISHING · UNITED KINGDOM · BAND D · CLAIMED ONLY

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Advertising and marketing group WPP put about £300 million into AI, data and its WPP Open platform in 2025 and says close to 90% of client-facing staff use it every day. Revenue fell in 2025, and WPP has published no productivity or revenue effect from the platform.

ABOUT THIS SYNOPSIS

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Facts and figures are as reported by the sources listed below, which may be incomplete, self-reported or out of date. Check the original source before relying on any figure.

The impact band, proof marker and SEAM view are MarLuc's opinion. The organisation is not a MarLuc client and has not reviewed or endorsed this synopsis. Names and trademarks belong to their owners.

NOTICE WORDING LAST UPDATED 16 NOVEMBER 2026

AT A GLANCE

AI used: Agentic marketing platform with generative AI and AI agents (WPP Open), plus Microsoft 365 Copilot for all staff.

Implemented: 2024 onwards. Grade: band D, Task support, Claimed only.

Headline result, as reported: 71,000 staff using WPP Open regularly in 2025, up from 33,000, by WPP's annual report; revenue down 8.1%

1 · The case

The facts, as reported by the 4 sources listed at the end. Where a source is silent, the field says "Not reported".

Organisation

WPP. Advertising, media and marketing services group, headquartered in the UK with a presence in more than 100 markets. 98,655 people at 31 December 2025, per its 2025 annual report. Canvas block: 4. Operations and process. Also 3. Customers and proposition, 5. People and skills.

Business challenge

The challenge. WPP's 2025 annual report says clients expect it to use generative AI tools in its work and are increasingly able to buy licences to such tools themselves. The chief executive put recent underperformance down to excessive organisational complexity, the lack of an integrated operating model and inconsistent execution.

Who implemented it

In-house (In-house): WPP builds and runs WPP Open, its agentic marketing platform.
InfoSum (Software vendor): Data collaboration platform acquired in April 2025; powers WPP Open's data layer.
Google (Industry partner): Technology partner; a five-year expanded partnership to develop production workflows and features for WPP.
Microsoft (Software vendor): Supplies Microsoft 365 Copilot, being extended to all WPP employees in 2026.

Technology (SEAM pillar E)

SEAM types: T2 Embedded AI in existing software, T3 API integrations, T7 AI agents.
Deployment: Not reported. Vendors and products: Google, Microsoft, InfoSum, WPP Open, Open Intelligence, WPP Open Pro, Agent Hub, Microsoft 365 Copilot.

Where it was built in: WPP Open connects WPP's people, capabilities and clients; Open Intelligence, built on InfoSum's technology, is its data layer; Agent Hub offers agents built by WPP experts to its teams.

What changed

Before: 33,000 monthly active users in 2024. After: 71,000 in 2025, around 90% of client-facing staff, and WPP says it has begun to use WPP Open to simplify and integrate how it serves clients, notably in its media business. Measured results: Not reported beyond adoption. Revenue less pass-through costs fell 5.4% like-for-like in 2025, and headcount fell 8.7% from the start of the year, which WPP links to actions to offset falling revenue. [1] [2] [3] [4]

What it cost

About £300 million cash investment in AI, data and WPP Open in 2025 and £250 million in 2024, per the annual report. Elevate28 restructuring, covering the wider strategy, is expected to cost about £400 million in cash over two years.

What it saved

Not reported for the platform. Elevate28 targets £500 million of gross annualised savings by 2028, which WPP attributes to operating model changes, removing duplicated support functions and property, without separating any AI share. [1] [2] [3] [4]

Governance and control

WPP launched an AI Governance Framework in June 2025, with an AI Policy, an AI Agent Governance Framework for agents built in WPP Open and an AI Vendor Review Process. An AI Governance Committee that includes the CEO and CTO provides executive oversight, and the Board is asked to complete Responsible AI Use training. All by WPP's annual report; no independent assurance of these controls is reported.

S2 · Accountable owner · Claimed
An AI Governance Committee of senior leaders, including the CEO and CTO, provides executive oversight, sets direction and approves key policies, by WPP's annual report. [1]

A1 · Safe use · Claimed
An AI Policy sets binding requirements for AI use, and WPP says it has provided AI training since 2019; the Board is asked to complete Responsible AI Use training. [1]

A2 · Human in the loop · Claimed
WPP says human oversight remains essential; its AI and Transformation Lead described a model where AI informs and a human decides on irreversible decisions. How this is applied to client work is not reported. [1] [4]

A3 · Monitoring and assurance · Claimed
WPP tracks platform use as a KPI and reports an annual data risk score of 1.54 out of five; monitoring of AI output quality is not reported. [1]

A4 · Vendor AI · Claimed
WPP says it maintains an AI Vendor Review Process for all third-party providers. [1]

A5 · Agent controls · Claimed
Agents built in WPP Open must meet standards on safety, bias, data rights, traceability and output quality, with named ownership, by WPP's account. [1]

A6 · Standards and regulation · Claimed
WPP says it tracks the EU AI Act, GDPR and IP law and turns new requirements into practical guidance. [1]

What worked, what did not, what is unproven

WORKED

– Adoption: monthly active users rose from 33,000 to 71,000 in a year, by WPP's account.

– Investment held to plan: about £300 million in 2025, in line with planned spend, by WPP's account.

DID NOT

– Revenue: 2025 revenue fell 8.1% reported and 3.6% like-for-like, and WPP's top 25 clients declined 4.1% like-for-like, per its preliminary results.

– Sir Martin Sorrell, WPP's former chief executive, told Digiday that Rose has made "no real progress" on underlying business performance.

UNPROVEN

– Whether WPP Open raises productivity, quality or revenue; WPP has not published such figures.

– How deeply staff use the platform; the KPI counts monthly active users.

Timeline

2024 WPP spends £250 million on AI, data and WPP Open; 33,000 monthly active users [1]

Apr 2025 WPP acquires InfoSum, whose data collaboration technology now powers WPP Open's data layer [1]

Jun 2025 WPP launches its AI Governance Framework, including rules for agents built in WPP Open [1]

Oct 2025 WPP Open Pro, a self-service version for brands, launches [1]

Jan 2026 Agent Hub, a catalogue of AI agents built by WPP experts, launches inside WPP Open [1]

Feb 2026 Elevate28 strategy: a single company of four operating units unified by WPP Open; 2025 revenue down 8.1% [2]

Aug 2026 Digiday reports the £300 million annual AI investment maintained and about 1,260 jobs cut in the first half [3]

2 · Grade and SEAM assessment

MarLuc's opinion, made on the evidence above. How cases are graded: marluc.co.uk/case-studies/how-we-rate

Level of change and impact

Claimed: B. Grade: D, Task support. Proof: Claimed only. Level of change: Task support.

Task support (Level 1, band D), claimed as operating model change (band B). Staff use the platform widely and WPP is restructuring around it, but no published measure shows changed cost, cycle time or quality from the platform.

Graded D, claimed B. WPP reports wide daily use and is restructuring into four units unified by WPP Open, which it presents as an operating model change. No published figures link the platform to productivity, cost per piece of work, quality or revenue, which fell in 2025.

The SEAM view and lessons learnt

WPP has done the adoption work at scale: one platform, a usage KPI, training and a written governance framework covering agents and vendors. The reports do not yet show the effect: adoption is measured, while productivity, cost per piece of work and client outcomes are not published. For a large organisation, the transferable point is to set outcome measures alongside the usage KPI before the investment grows.

1. Pair every adoption KPI with an outcome measure.
2. Write rules for agents before staff can build and share them.
3. Report AI savings separately from restructuring savings.

Evidence

Score 2 of 4. Self-reported in the annual report: adoption and investment figures are WPP's own KPIs alongside audited financial results; Digiday reports independently on the strategy, investment and results.

3 · Original sources

Read these in full. To challenge a fact or a grade, use the contact form at marluc.co.uk or the link on https://marluc.co.uk/case-studies/wpp-open-ai-platform

[1] WPP: Annual Report and Accounts 2025
https://cdn.wpp.com/raw/upload/v1778673483/wpp/project/wpp/files/investors/2026/annual-report/wpp_annual_report_2025.pdf

[2] WPP: Strategy Update and 2025 Preliminary Results (26 February 2026)
https://res.cloudinary.com/wpp-cloudinary/raw/upload/v1778567193/wpp/migrated/wpp-2025-preliminary-results-and-strategy-update.pdf

[3] Digiday: As WPP's Cindy Rose marks a year as CEO, turnaround is underway but far from certain (August 2026)
https://digiday.com/media-buying/as-wpps-cindy-rose-marks-a-year-as-ceo-turnaround-is-underway-but-far-from-certain/

[4] aibl: Human-AI collaboration at WPP (talk summary)
https://aiblmedia.com/downloads/human-ai-collaboration-wpp/

WPP website: https://www.wpp.com

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