
Cirque du Soleil to Help Burnish Sun Life Brand

By Editor Test *Wed, Aug 12, 2009*

The U.S. unit of the Canadian insurer has also hired the ad agency that created Geico's Gekko and Cavemen campaigns.

Sun Life Financial, at the urging of a marketing director recently arrived from Lincoln Financial, has decided to burnish its brand in the United States and has hired The Martin Agency, the ad agency behind the Geico Cavemen and other successful campaigns, to help them.

"Sun Life is well-known in its native Canada, but in the U.S. we need to dramatically increase our presence to financial advisors and consumers," said Priscilla Brown, who had been chief brand manager at Lincoln Financial Group for almost two years before joining Sun Life Financial in January 2009.

In addition, Sun Life announced a partnership with Cirque du Soleil, the organization whose musical trapeze extravaganzas have become staple entertainment in Las Vegas and DisneyWorld. Sun Life is the Official Insurance Partner of Cirque du Soleil U.S. Big Top Touring Shows, U.S. Arena Touring Shows, and the Presenting Partner of a major new Cirque du Soleil U.S. show to be announced next month.

The Wellesley-based financial services firm, a unit of Toronto-based Sun Life of Canada, ranked 18th among variable annuity issuers in the U.S. in 2008, with sales of \$2.0 billion. In the second quarter of 2009, the U.S. business reported net income of \$337 million, up from a \$333 million loss in the first quarter of the year.

It was the U.S. unit's first profitable quarter since the first quarter of 2008, when it netted \$82 million. The company's largest business, individual annuities, had net income of \$222 million. The annuity business had absorbed losses of more than \$1.4 billion during the prior three quarters.

The Martin Agency, based in Richmond, boasts a client list that includes Genworth Financial, NASCAR, BF Goodrich, The JFK Presidential Library, WalMart, and UPS. But the firm's best-known work may be the ads it created for Geico, including the Cockney Gekko, the resentful Cavemen, and the Real People ads that paired ordinary policyholders with Little Richard, Joan Rivers, Peter Frampton, Charo and other celebrities.

"This is a dream partner for us," said Bruce Kelley, partner and vice Chairman of The Martin Agency. "Getting consumers to take a fresh look at a venerable brand is among our favorite assignments."

© 2009 RIJ Publishing. All rights reserved.