# Interpublic reports rise in 4Q profits

The Associated Press

Interpublic Group of Cos., which owns advertising and marketing agencies, said Friday that its fourth-quarter net income rose 20 percent, but its revenue slipped because of lower spending by clients.

Also on Friday, Interpublic raised its dividend by 25 percent to 7.5 cents and said it plans a $300 million buyback program.

The company reported that net income for the three months that ended Dec. 31 was $313.3 million, or 68 cents. That compares with $259 million, or 50 cents per share, a year earlier.

Excluding a gain from its sale of a small stake in Facebook Inc., the company earned 56 cents per share.

Revenue slipped to $2.06 billion from $2.07 billion.

Analysts had expected earnings per share of 53 cents per share on revenue of $2.07 billion.

"2012 challenged us in terms of growth, due in large part to account losses suffered in 2011, but we demonstrated our ability to control expenses and drive significant value creation through our strong balance sheet and the return of capital to our owners," said Michael I. Roth, Interpublic's chairman and CEO in a statement. "Our offerings are highly competitive and we are coming into this year in a much stronger position with respect to client retention and new business activity."

Interpublic announced last November that it sold its remaining Facebook stake for proceeds of $95 million. The company bought a stake of less than half a percent of Facebook in 2006, two years after the company was founded and four years before it went public. It sold the first half of its holdings in August 2011.

Interpublic's dividend is payable March 25 to holders of record as of March 11.

Shares of Interpublic rose nearly 2 percent, or 24 cents, to $12.49 on Friday morning.

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