

**100
AGENCIES**



AT THE HELM
Elaine Ferguson, CEO, and David Paragamian, President (US)

PERFORMANCE
Revenue jumped 7% from the previous year and head count nudged up

HIGHLIGHTS
Hired Elaine Ferguson as CEO

Netted two AOR wins

Beth McMahon-Wise promoted to EVP of scientific strategy

CHALLENGES
Bolstering the company's medical education capabilities to take advantage of a shift in tactics and priorities

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“FUNDAMENTALLY, I BELIEVE THAT WE'RE SCIENTIFIC STORYTELLERS.”

—DAVID PARAGAMIAN

THE APOTHECOM GROUP

A scientific services firm strikes gold



Like just about every other agency, The ApotheCom Group no longer counts digital as a nice-to-have service. “All of our clients are working with us digitally,” reports David Paragamian, the company’s US president. But APO believes it’s digital in ways that other agencies are not—witness the QR codes embedded in scientific posters the firm has created for clients.

“Digital is part of our DNA,” agrees Elaine Ferguson, newly hired CEO of The ApotheCom Group, which houses medical communication shops apothecom and ScopeMedical—and which itself is a subsidiary of holding company Huntsworth Health. And while both of the ApotheCom agencies handle traditional activities for clients, more and more of the campaigns upon which they work use virtual events or online hubs to bring target audiences together, Ferguson says.

According to Paragamian, the strategy and structure paid off in 2014. “In the core medical education business, 2014 was actually a very good year for us,” he says. The firm netted two AOR wins, one for a major pharma company and the other for an emerging one. Revenue jumped around 7% for the year, while overall head count nudged forward

1% to 2%. Expansion on the personnel front came with new and larger quarters for ApotheCom’s San Francisco office, which is positioned to reach emerging pharma companies looking to work with senior-level counselors.

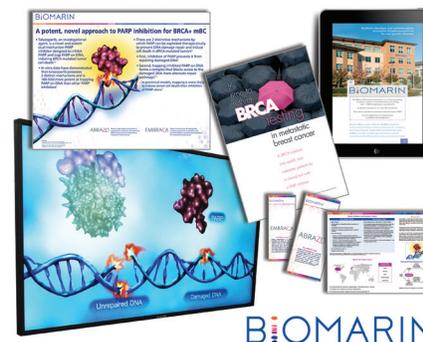
“Start-ups don’t have time to work through an agency bureaucracy. They need real-life strategy and they need senior people,” Ferguson explains. They also want help close at hand: “Our West Coast–based clients want a West Coast–based team. To lead the San Francisco office, Beth McMahon-Wise, a 10-year agency veteran, was promoted last year. She’s now EVP of scientific strategy.

ApotheCom’s workload has similarly evolved. A large part of client assignments are now “about building communities,” Ferguson says, predicting that “healthcare professional communities are a huge part of what the future looks like.” With pharma reps finding it harder and harder to get face time with physicians, she notes, medical communications need to fill the information void. That, to hear Paragamian tell it, plays right to ApotheCom’s strengths.

“Fundamentally, I believe that we’re scientific storytellers,” he notes.

Asked to identify some of the company’s signature work during 2014, Paragamian points to what he views as a sterling example of storytelling, which revolved around creating a large educational platform for a client in the cardiovascular space. The platform was connected to an annual congress where many of the experts who contributed to the platform also presented.

Ferguson points to scientific services as another



A classic example of storytelling involving a multifaceted educational platform connected to an annual congress

area of growth (“we’re seeing huge expansion”). As a result, the type of talent the company needs has evolved considerably over the past 18 months. “You’re seeing a rise in terms of our scientific strategists,” she explains. “It’s a talent challenge” to find new staffers who can fill the strategist role.

Ferguson, who’s based in London, expects to spend a good deal of time in the US during the next few years. Look for her to bolster the company’s medical education capabilities to take advantage of what she sees as a shift in tactics and priorities.

—John Frank