



**AT THE HELM**  
Sharon Callahan,  
president and CEO

**PERFORMANCE**  
Grew head count into  
triple digits

**HIGHLIGHTS**  
Hired Dan Chichester  
as chief creative officer,  
Jeff Bratteson as SVP  
and creative director  
and Paula van de Nes  
as director of medical  
strategy

Won Merck's biosimilar  
business, Takeda's  
cancer drug leuprorelin  
(as global professional  
AOR) and work from  
Abbott Diagnostics

Grew its relationship  
with existing client  
Johnson & Johnson

**CHALLENGES**  
A push to create a  
global network

For contact details, service offerings and client roster, see Agency A to Z, beginning on page 183

## LLNS

A transitional year paved the way to new openings at this venerable agency



The year 2014 was something of a transition year for LLNS, owing in large part to a change in leadership. Sharon Callahan took over as president and CEO, replacing Janet Donnelly. Head count rose from 92 to 100 and the agency landed several high-profile assignments: Merck's biosimilar business, Takeda's cancer drug leuprorelin (as global professional AOR) and work from Abbott Diagnostics. LLNS also grew its relationship with existing client Johnson & Johnson.

The company did all this while simultaneously doing a lot of good: Callahan says that pro bono efforts, like work on behalf of the Global Alzheimer's Project as global AOR, account for about 20% of the agency's overall slate. Some of the pro bono efforts led in an entirely different direction altogether—as when the agency's work for the Arthritis Foundation became a springboard for new, paid assignments, Callahan says.

She's quick to add that pro bono work isn't a "gimme." While the competition for certain assignments is intense, LLNS feels that it's well worth the effort. Flexing its creative and strategic muscle in new areas is one way Callahan hopes to evolve the company's energy. But she acknowledges that change of this nature was necessary. "We had a low win rate last year," Callahan reports, adding that in 2015 LLNS is converting two of every three

opportunities.

The keys, to hear Callahan tell it, were listening and learning. Losing Novartis's Afinitor business in 2013 to what she describes as "a couple of smart people with a laptop" was a moment that underlined the need for change. This meant stripping away "a lot of process that had been legacy and didn't really serve us or our clients," Callahan says, and bringing in new talent. Additions included Dan Chichester as chief creative officer, Jeff Bratteson as SVP and creative director and Paula van de Nes as director of medical strategy.

LLNS also came around to acknowledging that some of its work was getting lost in the shuffle. Callahan says there were a few times in recent years when the company would get feedback about work that was not its own. "We realized all these pitches were kind of blurring altogether," she explains. As a result, LLNS has added a range of voices to its pitch work, rather than limiting input to senior-level staff.

The company has also turned its attention inward. New initiatives include Disruption Days, an internal effort developed by Omnicom sibling TBWA. The get-togethers present an opportunity to look at conversations surrounding a brand and define what the agency might do to render them more effective.

As an example, Callahan recalls how LLNS sifted through 300,000 points of data when devising work for a schizophrenia medication before happening on a "eureka!" moment. It found that



Above left: Pro bono work for Physicians for Peace, like this poster for at-risk pregnant Dominican teens, energized LLNS. Above: Promo work for the Arthritis Foundation

psychiatrists, the target prescribers for the medication, had a high preference for buying "green" cars and eating at farm-to-table markets. This little learning prompted LLNS to swap out imagery typical for the category—patients bagging groceries at a counter—and replace it with images of patients at a green market.

While LLNS's evolution continues, Callahan says the first six months of 2015 show it is on the right path. Up next: a push to create a global network.

—Deborah Weinstein

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—SHARON CALLAHAN