



AT THE HELM
Michael McLinden (right), practice director, CP Health + Wellness, and Steve Connelly, president and copywriter, Connelly Partners

PERFORMANCE
Was a year of transformation

HIGHLIGHTS
Grew and realigned itself through acquisition and name change

Picked up assignments from Afaxys, NeuroMetrix and GW Pharmaceuticals

CHALLENGES
Putting resources behind new identity

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

McK|CP HEALTHCARE

A merger that makes sense



When Connelly Partners acquired McK Healthcare last summer, it was the rare agency-on-agency deal that made immediate sense on multiple levels: Connelly inherited McK's traditional pharma strength and nontraditional pharma thinking, while McK availed itself of Connelly's experience within the surging wellness space.

"[McK partner and chief strategy officer] Mike [McLinden] and I had been talking for four years. It gave us a lot of lead time to work through the 'speed bumps,'" recalls Connelly Partners president and copywriter Steve Connelly. McLinden agrees, adding, "The way both of us wanted this to work—it wasn't something we could do in baby steps."

Thus the post-acquisition company—named McK|CP before a recent change to CP Health + Wellness (CPH+W), which was announced as this issue of *MM&M* went to press—didn't spend a lot of time hashing out vision statements. Rather, it hit the ground running, netting assignments from Afaxys (for corporate branding and emergency contraceptive brands), NeuroMetrix (for the Quell wearable pain-relief device) and GW Pharmaceuticals (for corporate branding and convention materials).

It helped that Connelly, McLinden (now officially CPH+W's practice director) and their teams had a similar philosophical outlook when it came to crafting patient appeals. "We're defined by a pursuit of empathy," Connelly explains. "Rather than create stuff that entertains or overtly informs, as a lot

of existing pharma work does, we're looking to be more connective ... I'm not going to say, 'Hey, this is revolutionary,' but we think it's a different way to approach a meeting."

CPH+W has been received enthusiastically in those meetings. Still, McLinden expresses some impatience with pharma's traditional reluctance to embrace change. "When you talk to people you respect and they say, 'That's a great idea, but I'm not sure I'm ready to sell it to my boss,' it's frustrating." Connelly puts it less bluntly: "We have a saying around here that 'nobody loses pitches quite like we do.' We lose 'em and [the would-be client] always comes back ... We see the scorecards. They might as well say, 'We're just not sure we're ready.'"

Connelly Partners, which houses CPH+W, other recent purchases ISM (a hospitality marketing agency) and Pod Design (a digital gaming company) and more, counts about 130 people under its roof. The company formerly known as McK and McK|CP currently employs 15 full-timers and will likely net around \$4 million in revenue in 2015.

Now that CPH+W has forged its new identity and worked its way through the post-acquisition adjustment period, you'd expect its leaders to make bold predictions about imminent professional glories. Instead, Connelly shares what he considers "a pragmatically attainable and not overly aggressive" goal: "I hope that this division will have the opportunity to present its capabilities to five to eight more clients and convert at least four of them."



Above left: CPH+W creatives hoped to address unmet pain needs in this Quell ad. Above: BD Simplist as source of calm

“I HOPE THAT THIS DIVISION WILL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO PRESENT ITS CAPABILITIES TO FIVE TO EIGHT MORE CLIENTS AND CONVERT AT LEAST FOUR OF THEM.”

—STEVE CONNELLY

Which isn't to say that anyone at the company lacks for confidence or ambition. "When you go out and actively prospect for more business, you had better be 100% sure of what you've got under the hood. Well, we want to take this thing on the road for a drive. We want some more at-bats," Connelly says. "Now, I'm not sure if we'll win or lose, but I'm damn sure about who we are. It's not false modesty. This thing works. This thing hunts."

—Larry Dobrow