



**AT THE HELM**

Owen McCorry, EVP and general manager, Merkle Health

**PERFORMANCE**

Revenues above \$70 million for 2014

**HIGHLIGHTS**

Hired more than 70 employees as it grew out health

**CHALLENGES**

Evolving in-house education programs for client use

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

**MERKLE**

Building growth on marketing analytics



Merkle Health EVP and general manager Owen McCorry doesn't exactly sniff derisively when he hears other agencies talking about their newfound skill in performance marketing. But neither does he give the expected rejoinder about how an increase in the number of companies offering (or attempting to offer) such services affirms the importance of those services, and thus Merkle's longstanding mission.

"The ability to know the audience, either on an individual or segment level—we've been doing that for 20 years," McCorry says. "We understand and know the relevant data that needs to be used to help create personalized experiences."

As Merkle built out its health-specific arm—which grew its head count from 252 at the end of 2013 to 323 at the end of 2014 and drove revenue past \$70 million in 2014, the company reports—it adjusted its systems to make them simpatico with those of pharma and healthcare clients. Merkle Health's technology integrates with content management systems and sales force tools; its technologists and scientists live and breathe the vernacular.

"Personalized, relevant and one-to-one marketing are not new concepts. But with the continued growth of data and data science, there's a real opportunity for [pharma/healthcare organizations] to drive personalized marketing in a way they've

never done it before," McCorry explains. "Most agencies haven't grown up with this. We have."

The industry appears to be responding in kind. Merkle Health counts three types of clients on its roster: insurers/payers (Anthem, Humana, Emblem Health), traditional pharma companies (Sanofi, AbbVie, Bristol-Myers Squibb) and what McCorry categorizes as "other health-related or personal-care/OTC entities" (NutriSystem, the Laser Spine Institute).

In addition to handling CRM and other data-intensive campaigns for them, Merkle Health has cautiously branched out into the advice-giving biz. "Clients are looking to us for expertise around marketing analytics. More and more, we're advising them on strategies and the organizational alignment they need to make these [campaigns] work," McCorry says.

Achieving that alignment has proved to be Merkle Health's biggest challenge in recent months. "Making sure we're fully aligned with the client's strategy—that's sometimes easier said than done," he continues. "If there's not internal alignment on the client side, we're probably not delivering the value they expect and need."

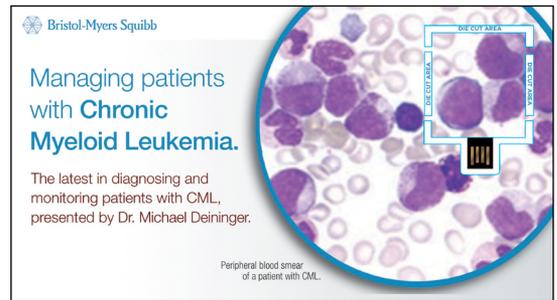
Merkle Health doesn't believe that it alone can help frustrated clients get there—but it's willing to do everything within its power to pitch in. To that end, the company will soon roll out its corporate-wide digital certification program to external groups, likely in the fourth quarter of 2015.

"We've been doing it here a while. Basically, it's a series of education requirements that we put in place to make sure our staff stays ahead of the curve," McCorry explains.

Billed as a "digital IQ certification program," the Merkle effort consists of five virtual classes totaling 20 hours (!) in length. Once "students" pass the classes—"Digital Experience Creation," "How Digital Data Works," "How Digital Media Planning and

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—OWEN McCORRY



Above left: Merkle's Auvi-Q epinephrine injection app for HCPs. Above: A print ad for Bristol-Myers Squibb and CML

Buying Works," "How Digital Measurement Works" and "How Digital Marketing Technology Works"—they can attend deeper-dive labs on each topic.

"We've been doing a lot of on-site education with clients anyway. It makes sense to formalize it and really build it out," McCorry says.

—Larry Dobrow