



AT THE HELM

Mark Arnold, EVP and managing director

PERFORMANCE

Revenues up 7% to 8% over the previous year's

HIGHLIGHTS

Launched United Therapeutics' Unituxin, Zogenix's Zohydro ER, Novartis's Cosentyx, Janssen's Invega Trinza and a Taiho Oncology product

CHALLENGES

Maintaining newfound "launch shop" status

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

NEON

A young agency transcends its "conflict shop" lineage



There's a heck of a story brewing at 38th and Broadway. It's about a five-year-old conflict shop that quietly went about its business for a few years and then, seemingly out of nowhere, grew wings and now soars high above the launch landscape.

Neon, an independent in the FCB Health ranks, came about in 2009 to handle a conflict account for Janssen's diabetes blockbuster Invokana (in Phase II at the time). Remarkably, during its first three years, Neon didn't handle a single product launch. Even more remarkably, in 2015, it has already had four client products approved, with a fifth due in September.

"We're setting new records," says Mark Arnold, EVP, managing director.

Here are those 2015 launches in full: United Therapeutics' Unituxin for pediatric neuroblastomas (business won in December, product approved April, launched June); abuse-deterrent technology for Zogenix's Zohydro ER (approved February, launched April); Novartis's Cosentyx for psoriasis (approved January); Janssen's Invega Trinza, a three-monthly injection for schizophrenia (won December, approved May, launched June); and a Taiho Oncology product, due for approval in September (Neon launched the new company, a division of Otsuka, at ASCO).

Although most of these launches have come with daunting deadlines, Arnold believes these fast turnaround times are starting to work in Neon's favor.

"We're making the right decisions first," he says. "There's less time for clients to be wishy-washy, and you have to be more definitive in your direction. They don't need to see things three, four times. They're reading everything as if it's the last time they're going to see it."

In fact, Arnold has already been able to demonstrate significant cost-savings to clients by "accelerating" such products to market versus working within the standard timeframes—and is making a strong case for all future products to be handled with similar speed and diligence. "When people have time, they'll take time," he says.

While Neon won't be defined by 2014, the agency still posted growth of 7% to 8%, with head count remaining in the 125 to 130 range. "Let's just say we're tracking well for the first part of this year," says Arnold wryly.

Arnold believes a big factor in Neon's recent successes is having now eight to 10 launches under its belt. "We always had the special sauce, and now I think we have the track record that can stand on it," he says. "There's a certain amount of clout when you walk in a room and say, 'We're the agency that launched Invokana.'"

Kevin McHale, EVP, executive creative director, feels Neon is also blessed with having clients that are committed to patients. "They really do believe that they can make a difference," he says. "[For us], coming up with ideas that can get them out of the box, that's all part of it." In fact, Neon ensures that every single brand-facing employee interacts with both patients and sales reps within their clients' markets.



Above left: Neon's DTC ad for United Therapeutics' Tyvaso (for PAH). Above: Its unbranded ad for Novartis Dermatology

Arnold believes the collection of personal health data will play an increasingly important role in the future of healthcare. "The well-connected, well-informed patient knows what their data should look like—and can actually generate it on their own."

One last thing: Is Neon still a conflict shop? Absolutely not, says Arnold. "We're gaining these major brands and big categories, and launching new classes of products. I think we've stepped out of that shadow now."

—James Chase

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—MARK ARNOLD