



AT THE HELM

Tim Frank, managing partner

PERFORMANCE

Revenues of \$10 million to \$15 million, up 20% from the previous year

HIGHLIGHTS

Big clients include AstraZeneca and Manhattan Labs and Discovery Labs

No employee turnover in 2014

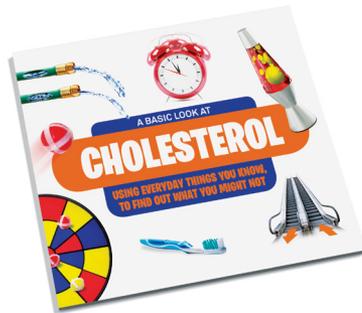
CHALLENGES

Weathering changes in the market

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

TRIPLE THREAT COMMUNICATIONS

Motivation, ability and trigger



Founded in 2005, Triple Threat Communications is rounding off its first decade—but forget about any plans to mark that milestone. “We don’t celebrate us,” insists Tim Frank, the affable and accessible managing partner. “We focus on our clients.”

As an independent full-service agency, Triple Threat offers strategy development and creative development for both professional and consumer groups. Frank likes to call Triple Threat an “un-agency,” meaning that unlike traditional firms, it puts clients’ needs over agency success. There’s nothing “un” about its current revenues, however: 2014’s \$10 million to \$15 million showed a 20% increase over 2013.

Triple Threat specializes in integrated solutions across customer groups: sales reps, healthcare professionals, patients and managed markets. Over the past year the agency has upped its digital component, but they’re still moving with caution. “Right now digital is maybe 20% of our work,” says Frank. “It may never be the majority. You can’t do it all digitally. We want to focus on interaction.”

Frank’s agency is a small one, with a head count of 15 full-time employees (and zero turnover in the past year). But a crucial part of its business model is to bring in freelancers as needed, and they have as many as 40 to 50 people they can rely on.

“One of the main differences between us and

other agencies is that we hire only very experienced people,” Frank says. “We look for team players who understand our culture, which is very genuine, open and transparent. It’s a challenge to find really experienced people who share our DNA and want to work with brands, but we manage to do that.”

Another focus is spending a lot of time with clients. “We believe marketing is a contact sport,” he continues. “We don’t move people up to the top shelf where clients can’t reach them.” The firm’s biggest client is AstraZeneca (mature brands covering respiratory, GI and cardiovascular); others include Manhattan Labs and Discovery Labs.

Changes in the market are creating the biggest challenges. “The days of the independent physician are decreasing rapidly. Every month more of them are joining organized networks,” Frank notes. And as more and more people are being brought into the healthcare system, that increases the downward pressure on price. “We live in an 80% ‘genericized’ world,” he adds. “Primary care is increasingly moving toward generic products, and there are no more blockbuster brands. Everyone in this business needs to do more with less.”

Addressing the ever-growing issue of affordability is definitely on Triple Threat’s agenda. As creative director Jeff Perino puts it, “Finding creative ways to promote a brand’s affordability requires careful work within narrow parameters. It’s essential to keep the approach fresh.”

Why Triple Threat? It comes from the theory of behavior design developed by B. J. Fogg, the noted

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Above left: The Cholesterol Handbook uses everyday items to explain health questions. Above: Dutoprol’s website

social scientist who believes that to change behavior, three elements must converge: the motivation to perform the behavior, the ability to perform it and the trigger. “That’s the business we’re in,” says Frank. When asked if it’s anything like being a triple threat on Broadway—able to act, sing and dance—he says, “We could try that, but we’ll just keep doing what we’re doing.”

—Barbara Peck