



AT THE HELM
Jim Weiss, CEO and chairman

PERFORMANCE
Revenues of nearly \$83 million, up 10% from the previous year's

HIGHLIGHTS
40 new healthcare assignments, mostly in rare disease and cardiovascular

Big success with Apollo Endosurgery's Lap-Band

CHALLENGES
Diversifying client base

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

W2O GROUP

An agency with a “no walls” philosophy



“Fueled by analytics, driven by aha!” may sound like a big promise, but a quick data dive with W2O Group managing director Greg Matthews provides a glimpse of the universe of information that fuels the company’s client strategies. Some of the nuggets W2O can produce with a few clicks include a listing of the lifestyle publications doctors read, a comparison of the language with which doctors and patients discuss the same condition, the extent of influence health news has on online searches and who knows who in the Twitterverse.

This sort of granular insight led to considerable growth at W2O in 2014. Revenue jumped by 10% over the year-ago period, to \$82.7 million, while head count swelled by 53 employees, to 450. W2O also snared 40 new healthcare assignments, with the majority of the work coming in the rare-disease and cardiovascular spaces. Much of the new business arrived via existing clients, though personal networks and an active presence on the thought-leadership circuit also contributed.

Yet despite this growth, W2O and its network of firms—WCG, Twist and BrewLife—do not aspire to compete with larger holding companies, at least not on the basis of size. “We don’t want to be the biggest. That’s not the goal. The goal is quality,” says W2O CEO and chairman Jim Weiss.

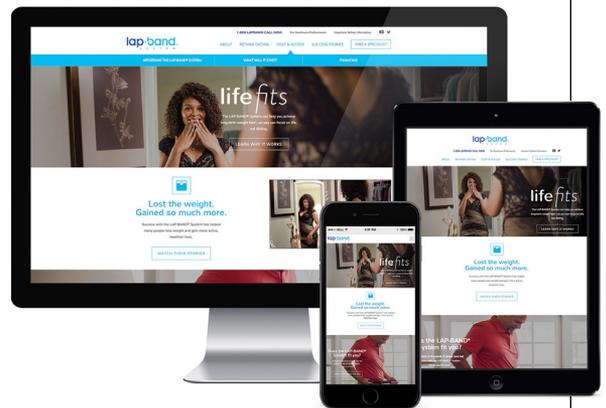
While Matthews says that Big Data influences the stories the agency tells, “it’s not the bigness” that makes an impression. Rather, it’s the person-

alities and habits W2O pulls from the data. This expertise has prompted clients to ask for more of agencies in general, says Jennifer Gottlieb, W2O’s chief operating officer and head of client services. Healthcare and pharma organizations, she believes, are seeking agencies—like W2O, of course—that can offer a full digital experience.

The agency’s work on the Lap-Band account, a brand refresh after Apollo Endosurgery bought the device from Allergan, is a prime example of how W2O attempts to fuse skill sets. W2O’s “It Fits” campaign was designed to introduce the item with a new point of view, which included using what the firm referred to as a “kinder, gentler and more relatable brand voice.” As part of the effort, W2O provided targeted marketing in areas with clusters of bariatric surgeons and conducted a branded Twitter chat with a physician and a patient influencer. Within the campaign’s first three months, sales surged by around \$13.7 million.

W2O’s “break up with your makeup campaign” for Galderma’s rosacea treatment Mirvaso also tapped multiple disciplines. In this instance, the group’s Twist subsidiary identified online influencers and gleaned insights from within blogger networks. It also crafted a host of interactive, sharable content.

Gottlieb attributes much of W2O’s recent success to a culture that encourages employees at all levels of the company to flex their skill sets; she characterizes it as a “no-wall philosophy.” She believes that



Above left: W2O’s educational patient-adherence video game for Saizen/Merck Serono. Above: A 30-second clip for Lap-Band

the agency’s approach positions it perfectly for an upcoming effort to diversify its client base.

The diversification push, however, is also about looking at what’s next for healthcare. To this end, Weiss says W2O is looking to work alongside more non-pharma clients. The worlds of consumer packaged goods and healthcare are bound to merge, he says, and having the know-how to flex its creative muscles across categories will prepare the agency and its clients for the future.

—Deborah Weinstein

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