



AT THE HELM
Paul Miller, president

PERFORMANCE
Revenue up 30%

HIGHLIGHTS
Scored about 17 brands, including dermatology brands for Astellas and work in Merck's vaccines

Grew organically with Bayer HealthCare

Expanded Ohio headquarters, looking to expand Pennsylvania office

Hired 20 staff, including Scott Holly, VP of strategy and planning

CHALLENGE
Turning AOR work into additional CLM business

For contact details, service offerings and client roster, see Agency A-to-Z, beginning on page 173

"I don't think the recession had a big effect on us. In some ways, it's a positive"

—Paul Miller

Blue Diesel

Shop finds opportunities in tough times, building on its AOR business



Digital times call for digital measures, and Blue Diesel's reported growth seems to underscore the fact that mid-size shops with a solid digital offering (and client base) didn't suffer much from a lagging economy last year. The inVentiv Health professional shop scored about 17 brands last year, hired 20 people and says revenue was up 30% in 2009, compared with 2008.

On the economy, Paul Miller, who recently took the reins as the agency's president, says that, relatively speaking, "I don't think [the recession] had a big effect on us. In some ways, it's a positive." How's that? "We're a growing organization and we're looking to add people to the staff, and the economy being down has increased the talent pool a little bit," says Miller. Kathy Gratz, formerly president at Blue Diesel, was promoted to CEO of the agency, and is now also group president of inVentiv's Selling Solutions, the network division that houses Blue Diesel.

Physical growth led to a square footage expansion at the Columbus, Ohio headquarters, and there are plans to expand the Newtown, PA office as well, says Miller. After the 20 hires, total headcount is at 110, give or take. Scott Holly, VP strategy and planning, was a key hire last year, according to Miller.

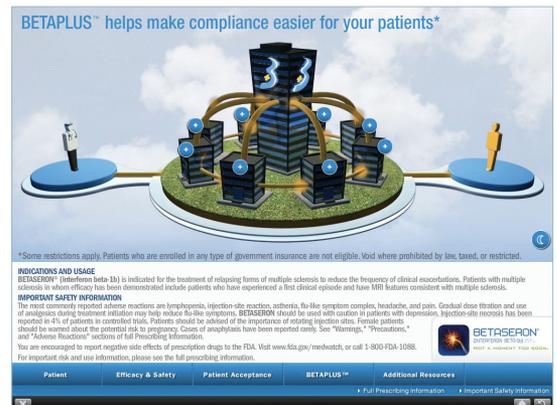
Accounts won last year include two dermatology

brands for Astellas—Protopic and Amevive—and a significant expansion with Merck in the vaccines division. "We do a lot with their online portal for vaccines, MerckVaccines.com," says Miller. The agency picked up four vaccines last year within Merck's infectious disease unit, according to Miller. Of the Merck wins, Miller says the "size of the brand within the overall portfolio varies, but [Merck] continues to be a valuable client for us, and a good partnership."

The agency saw new business wins with Novartis and AstraZeneca as well. Novartis tapped Blue Diesel for interactive on cardiovascular brands Valturna and Tekturna, including close-loop marketing programs (CLM). For AstraZeneca, the agency is working on Vimovo, a Nexium/naproxen combo pill indicated for osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis and ankylosing spondylitis, and to decrease the risk of developing gastric ulcers; the last indication is the part Blue Diesel is working on, according to Miller.

Blue Diesel had organic growth with Bayer, and is now working on professional-facing digital ads for that company's multiple sclerosis injectable, Betaseron, a blockbuster product, as well as Kogenate, an injectable for hemophilia.

Miller explains Blue Diesel's success as being partly related to changes in professional sales, namely dwindling face-time with doctors. "Lots of our clients are arming reps with tablet PCs, and trying to implement closed-loop marketing programs, and are perhaps no longer doing print visual aids," says Miller. "So the question becomes, can my AOR be the company that's doing the CLM work? That creates an opportunity for us," he says, adding that virtual and self-directed details are becoming more popular in general. "We



Above: Professional ad for Bayer's multiple sclerosis injectable Betaseron; Top: Part of a self-promotional ad

have a high degree of knowledge about the third-party [e-detail] platforms, and we can create content within those frameworks," says Miller.

Though still primarily a professional shop, Blue Diesel does do some consumer work on Merck's RotaTeq vaccine, indicated to protect infants from severe diarrhea and stomach flu. The agency also handles web properties in support of Home Diagnostics, a blood glucose monitor manufacturer. —Ben Comer