



AT THE HELM

Reid Connolly, president

PERFORMANCE

“Most successful year to date” with revenue nearly doubling in 2009

HIGHLIGHTS

Picked up six new accounts in 2009: consumer AOR for Amgen and Pfizer’s Enbrel, and digital agency for consumers and HCPs for Daiichi-Sankyo’s Welchol

Headcount increased from 17 to 45 in 2009. New executive hires include Michelle Kelly, Tom Donnelly and Alex Vandever

CHALLENGE

Staying abreast of industry regulations

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“I think pharma’s still learning about new media and how to integrate that into the overall mix”

—Reid Connolly

evoke interaction

Tough economic year spawned positive changes for growing firm



To hear an agency claim to have been “positively affected” by the economic results of 2009 may seem outlandish to some, but Reid Connolly, president of evoke interaction, argues: “In one of the worse economies of our lifetime, we had what was our most successful year-to-date.”

Connolly says he bases this affirmation on the fact that the agency’s growth flourished over the past year, in terms of client-base, revenue (which nearly doubled in 2009 to around \$8 million) and additional staff to support new business.

Though he admits that, in general, “marketing and advertising... may have seen a bit of a slump in spending, or at least a delay in spending” last year, the reality that pharma marketing is shifting toward digital is irrefutable.

“I think our clients are even more comfortable spending their budgets a little earlier this year than they were last year,” Connolly reasons, attributing this to digital.

Founded in 2006, evoke is in the Hunsworth Health family of companies, with offices in Manhattan and Philadelphia. The agency took on a whopping 28 new staff in 2009 (up from 17 in 2008) with plans to hire

even more personnel in 2010. New executive hires from last year include Michelle Kelly, VP, group account director; Tom Donnelly, managing director; and Alex Vandever, SVP, strategic development.

While the shop gained six new accounts in 2009—including consumer agency of record for Amgen and Pfizer’s Enbrel, and digital agency for consumers and HCPs for Daiichi-Sankyo’s Welchol—Connolly says that he encourages his staff to look at the big picture when measuring success at evoke: “Certainly, big achievements like account wins are great, but at the end of the day, account wins are short-lived when we are actually developing the work that’s going in the market, that’s driving our clients’ brands, that’s making all of our people feel good about the work that they’re doing every day.”

Along with the trend towards “more personalized engagement between both consumers and HCPs,” Connolly believes that agencies will soon be changing their marketing objectives towards attracting the healthcare audience in a more direct fashion.

“I think pharma’s still learning about new media and how to integrate that effectively into the overall marketing mix,” he says. “Pharmaceutical marketing is getting a lot smarter when it comes to actually developing and leveraging insights into audience groups, and kind of tailoring their messaging and attitudinal presentation standpoints... Although it’s not necessarily new this year, I think it’s getting more uptake and I think that will continue to be the case.”

One issue to remain aware of, Connolly points out, when considering increasingly interactive pharma



Above: A consumer website for Alnylam Pharmaceuticals; Top: Information about Novogyne’s Vivelle-Dot

marketing, is that it will be imperative to stay abreast of regulations concerning new media. “It looks like there will be new social media guidelines from the FDA,” he says. “We’ve been talking to our clients about it, saying, ‘Don’t expect big things from the guidelines’; even with the DTC guidelines, however many years ago that was, we’re still interpreting those every single day.”

An additional challenge that will arise across the industry in 2010, Connolly says, will be coping with pharma consolidation, which will become “one of those things where it’s outside of your control, so you hope it works out in some cases, and you’ll win some and you’ll lose some.” —Lauren Folino