



**AT THE HELM**

Dave Renner, EVP, creative director, and Susan Flinn, president

**PERFORMANCE**

Ended 2009 “up,” and 2010 is 15% above forecast so far

**HIGHLIGHTS**

Landed professional wins, one for an OTC wound care product and the other a medical device

Continuing to grow with Shionogi Pharma, working on six (former Sciele) products

Growing med ed wing

**CHALLENGE**

Doing A-plus work for existing clients

For contact details, service offerings and client roster, see Agency A-to-Z, beginning on page 171

# Interlink Healthcare Communications

Organic growth, thriving med ed division help firm overcome its rebuilding year

Interlink Healthcare Communications President Susan Flinn calls 2009 a rebuilding year in which the composition of the agency changed dramatically: “The staff house-cleaning involved numerous positions and allowed us to bring in new, fresh talent—people who are innovative thinkers and proactive in nature, ready to take the company to the next level.”

So far this year, seven new people have come on board, including two VPs. IHC eliminated the EVP, director of client services position and tapped Kathy Zaiser as VP, management supervisor, to round out a management team composed of Dave Renner, EVP, creative director, and Flinn. The other new VP is former Wishbone associate Matt Schneider, brought in to handle the Bristol-Myers Squibb business.

Recruiting hasn’t been easy. “It’s very hard to find smart, proactive, dedicated, service-oriented, innovative, thinking people—all in one,” Flinn says. But the president finally feels she has 43 people with the right chemistry, and there are three more openings.

Flinn joined IHC last year in a bid to right the ship after a series of setbacks. As could be expected, growth during the transitional phase has been minimal. “Last year we ended up,” is all she would say regarding performance. But the agency is 15% above 2010 forecast.

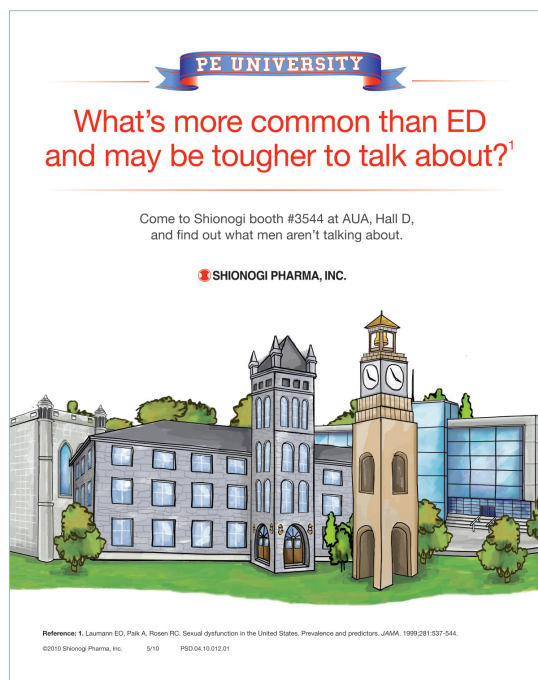
Flinn reports two professional wins, neither of which has been formally announced, one for an OTC wound care product, the other a medical device. The agency has also built on its 12-year relationship with Novar-

tis, earning preferred med ed vendor status for all of the Swiss drugmaker’s specialty products, to go with preferred-vendor status for the transplant franchise.

An active component in IHC’s med ed wing, beyond the standard speaker programs and advisory boards, has been convention activity, including booth elements, online direct marketing, door drops and symposia at conventions. “This has continued to be a big part of our clients’ promotional mix,” reports Flinn.

One client looking to enhance its convention presence has been Shionogi Pharma, an account the agency picked up after the Japanese drugmaker acquired Sciele Pharma. The six former Sciele products now on IHC’s roster span cardiology (Nitrolingual Pumpspray), diabetes (Fortamet, Fenoglide, Prandin, PrandiMet) and prelaunch duties on an unnamed men’s sexual health drug (most likely PSD502, a metered-dose spray for premature ejaculation). IHC lost one client last year, Meda Pharmaceuticals, and with it cancer pain compound Onsolis.

The agency prides itself on keeping longtime clients



Above: A professional ad from a med ed convention for an unnamed Shionogi Pharma product for men

happy. “The proof is in the day-to-day servicing of our existing clients,” says Flinn. “Long-term clients continue to give us additional business based on the fact that we consistently exceed their expectations.” While this helps cement reputation, it also makes economic sense in the current business climate: “Those new business opportunities are not as huge as they once were; the volume is definitely down,” she says.

Asked about the biggest challenge on the horizon, Flinn weighs in with: “Continuing to do A-plus work for existing clients while also going out to find new business to continue to grow—it’s a never-ending battle.” —Marc Iskowitz

**“Those new business opportunities are not as huge as they once were”**

—Susan Flinn