



AT THE HELM

Kelly Gratz, CEO with EVP, managing directors Paul Miller and Andrew Crawford

PERFORMANCE

"Monumental" year, with 60% growth in revenue

HIGHLIGHTS

Scored 10 account wins, including digital work for Merck and continued work with Onglyza

Worked with inVentiv partners on Sanofi's Aplenzin

Hired Dave Grillo to lead creative and Kate Lontchar as VP, studio director

CHALLENGE

Not giving into "trends"

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

"Let us help you out with the problem that you're having, and let's bring some innovative solutions"

—Kelly Gratz

Blue Diesel

Digital shop has 'groundbreaking' year with explosive growth, 10 account wins



To say that digital agency Blue Diesel experienced growth in 2010 would be putting it mildly. The predominantly professional inVentiv Health shop took on about 35 new staff—bringing the headcount to just below 120 personnel between the company's Columbus, OH headquarters and Newtown, PA office—10 account wins, and reported nearly 60% growth in revenue since 2009, according to CEO Kelly Gratz.

"For us, 2010 was a monumental year," says Gratz, who also serves as group president, selling accelerators, of inVentiv Selling Solutions. "[Y]ou think about 60% growth in any organization, and we've maintained the leadership team and we've maintained the core people. Given the amount of work we've accomplished, the number of new clients that came on board, and, most importantly, the work that was completed last year, [it was] so groundbreaking."

In keeping with the agency's penchant for expansion throughout 2010, Paul Miller, formerly president, took on the title of EVP, managing director—client development. On the change in title, Miller admits that some staff "aligned our titles a little bit," but his responsibilities within the agency have remained the same, adding that the new moniker, "really has more to do with how Blue Diesel fits into inVentiv as a whole."

Musing over the agency's advantageous business

angle during the recession, Miller says, "I think last year the sentiment was in some ways that the economic situation kind of played into our favor, because it taught clients who were feeling economic pressures, and cost and efficiency pressures to look for...different or alternative ways to accomplish some of their marketing efforts. Those sorts of circumstances led them to look to not just us, but companies that might be able to offer some of those alternative solutions."

Key additions to the leadership team over the past year have included Dave Grillo, SVP, creative director, who was hired to lead creative for the entire organization, and Kate Lontchar, VP, studio director, who is based in the Newtown office and heads up the studio's operations there.

Notable account wins included digital work with Merck that carried over from the previous year (Merck Vaccines.com), an integrated sales and marketing effort for the antidepressant Aplenzin (Sanofi), and continued work with Onglyza, which segued into working on the launch of Kombiglyze XR (both drugs are indicated for the treatment of type 2 diabetes, and both are co-promoted by AstraZeneca and Bristol-Myers Squibb).

Miller calls the shop's win of the Aplenzin business a "unique circumstance" in which Sanofi was really trying to find a partner that could "completely, commercially outsource responsibility for the product to a partner that would be able to handle everything, from a sales and marketing perspective. We were basically the agency on the marketing side for that with our partners at inVentiv also handling the selling piece.



Above: A website celebrating "things you've never heard of"; top: The campaign for Sanofi's Aplenzin

We think that's a pretty innovative offering and [are] proud of that in 2010," he adds.

Gratz maintains that while other agencies may have spent 2010 playing in to industry trends, such as the iPad, Blue Diesel does not think in terms of just one device: "What we're saying is, let us help you out with the problem that you're having, and let's bring some innovative solutions, and then it's going to be seamless on how we do that: whether it's an iPad, whether it's an iPhone, whether it's film. Technology, for us, is a very strong capability." —Lauren Folino