



AT THE HELM

Principals (clockwise) Steven Gold, Stephen Mullens, Larry Wolheim and Mike Sperling

PERFORMANCE

Ended the year with nearly 20% revenue growth

HIGHLIGHTS

Grew organically with Gilead and Actelion; added work from Amgen, Roche Molecular Systems, Ulthera and Edwards Lifesciences

Brought on George Fencil as director of digital strategy and account planning

CHALLENGE

Convincing local pharmas to work with the West Coast shop

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

“Rather than create Giant Digital, we’ve created a digital giant”

—Steven Gold

Giant Creative/Strategy

‘An excellent year’ with significant hires and some big digital breakthroughs



Giant Creative/Strategy principal Steven Gold calls 2010 an “excellent year.” After winning significant business from both new and existing clients and investing heavily in acquiring talent, the San Francisco shop ended the year with nearly 20% revenue growth.

“We looked at last year as a major investment year,” Gold explains. “Revenue growth was down a little from 2009 because of the investment we made in key hires, but revenue and profitability both grew.”

Headcount has increased from 45 at the end of 2009 to 70 now. Annex space was taken over to accommodate the growth. Gold expects to hire another seven-to-15 this year, and he’s looking for a new, bigger home for the agency.

A number of senior creative and account side people joined last year, and George Fencil was brought on board as director of digital strategy and account planning.

Gold recruits nationwide. He notes it’s gotten “a little harder” to continually find the best talent as the agency grows, but he’s been successful so far.

“A number of large East Coast agencies have started to think about taking the West Coast a little more seriously,” he says. “We’ve heard of and seen a number of satellite offices popping up. We’re not overly

concerned, but it does pose a bit of a recruitment challenge.”

This trend has also meant that Gold is “continually having to convince large West Coast biopharmas that they’re better served by local agencies.”

So far, he’s been successful at that too, as Giant has retained and expanded work with big bio pharma clients like Gilead and Actelion Pharmaceuticals.

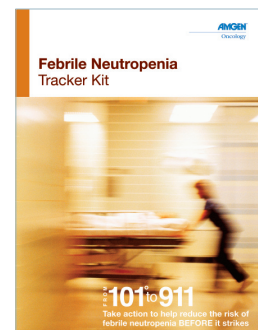
Perhaps the biggest and sweetest win of last year was landing two oncology products (Neulasta and Neupogen) from Amgen, which Giant had long sought as a client.

The agency also won device work from Edwards Lifesciences and expanded dermatology work with Neutrogena Corporation (multiple new brands) and Coria Laboratories (Atralin, Cloderm, Refissa and Tetrax).

This year’s wins include Roche Molecular Systems (for HPV Diagnostics) and Ulthera (for an ultrasound device). Gold is pleased about expanding devices and diagnostics work, and he attributes wins to the strength of the agency’s talent.

Emphasis on legal and regulatory aspects of communications continues to challenge clients. Many clients increasingly want “the latest and greatest tech and comms platforms,” and Gold calls 2010 an important year for continuing to integrate digital and the ability to think strategically and execute in all channels.

“We purposely sat a bit on the sidelines watching digital boutiques pop up, trying to steal business from our clients, and big agencies trying to figure out what they were doing—either buying digital agencies or integrating digital,” he says. “We’ve found that even though channels are changing, at the core of the busi-



Above: Professional ad for Neutrogena (left) and an Amgen tracker kit (right); Top: Mobile apps for PAH

ness content is king still, and having the right strategic thinkers and creative thinkers is still key.”

He continues: “When it got down to doing the work [many digital shops] didn’t understand the intricacies of the market. Then clients started asking if we could oversee their digital group. Of course we could, but we also told them we could do the work. Continuing to focus on what we do best has allowed us to take back a lot of that work and be taken seriously when clients are looking for pure digital content. Rather than create Giant Digital we’ve created a digital giant.”

—Tanya Lewis