



AT THE HELM
Kerry Hilton, CEO

PERFORMANCE
Gross billings climbed 57%, revenue up 43%

HIGHLIGHTS
Unveiled first high-profile national consumer campaign for US Oncology

Additional wins: Audi-toniq, LIVESTRONG foundation and Nobel Labs

Launched “Market Intelligence” and agency-wide training and coaching program

Moved into bigger, custom-designed space

CHALLENGE
Finding talent

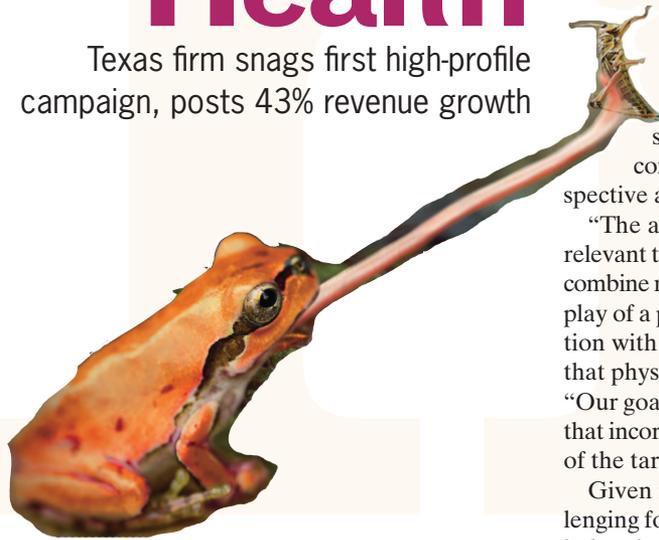
For contact details, service offerings and client roster, see Agency A-to-Z, beginning on page 169

“Silos and walls came down. We have more fluid communication in a bigger agency”

—Kerry Hilton

HCB Health

Texas firm snags first high-profile campaign, posts 43% revenue growth



It was a transformational year for Austin shop HCB Health, which will celebrate its 10th anniversary this September. The three partners clarified and refined their roles last year as the agency continued to enhance capability and grow business and staff — gross billings climbed 57%, revenue was up 43% and headcount increased to 41, up from about 34 ending 2009.

“We started to get additional momentum, additional wins, rebranded the agency and took a complete look at our business, staff, clients and where we’re going,” says CEO Kerry Hilton. “We moved to a bigger, custom-designed space in January this year. It has a very different look, feel, process. Silos and walls came down. We have more fluid communication in a bigger agency.”

Hilton previously served as CEO and executive creative director. In-house talent was promoted to take over creative growth. Partner Nancy Beesley is now chief marketing officer, and partner Lloyd Sheep is now chief operating officer.

Beesley notes HCB’s device focus provides some insulation from the recession. Sheep adds that service provider business is also stable.

The agency launched its first, and very high-profile, national consumer campaign last year for US Oncology, which awarded additional assignments (corporate

and iKnowMed EHR). Work with Alcon Laboratories expanded to an AOR assignment for Alcon Surgical, and McKesson awarded new Specialty Care Solutions work. Other wins included Audiotoniq hearing aids; Harden Healthcare (corporate); LIVESTRONG foundation (numerous digital assignments); and Nobel Labs (fasprin). Lanx was lost when it took business in-house.

Digital and media departments have both expanded. Sheep says search engine marketing has become essential to client media plans, and it’s the fastest growing component of HCB’s media business.

A “Market Intelligence” group was launched last year. Research from HCB’s work with clients was combined in a secure, searchable database, and Hilton says it was conceived to leverage the agency’s unique perspective across the healthcare continuum.

“The aim is to give [us] tools to quickly find data relevant to a client’s market and to derive insights that combine multiple factors, such as determining the interplay of a patient’s demographic and media consumption with that patient’s choice of physician and with that physician’s hospital affiliation,” Hilton explains. “Our goal is to provide clients with informed counsel that incorporates the complex real-world perspectives of the target market patients or customers.”

Given its Texas location, recruitment can be challenging for HCB. The partners note talent from other industries, including copywriters and interactive managers, are easily trained and bring fresh perspectives. Beesley adds that pharma and surgical sales reps “make



Left: An ad for Fasprin, a low-dose aspirin tablet that melts in the mouth, avoiding irritation to the gastro-intestinal tract; top: Part of a professional ad for Alcon’s new integrated (and “world’s fastest”) WaveLight Refractive Suite

really good account people.” An agency-wide training and coaching program launched in 2010.

The transition from print to digital is one of the biggest industry trends the partners see. HCB is creating multiple iPad apps and launching “quite a few” social media programs for consumer service clients, such as hospital and managed care clients.

Taking full advantage of its new Austin office, HCB hosted an “Interactive Health Happy Hour “ (iH3) during SXSW this year. It drew nearly 300 guests, including global marketing directors.

New business continues to roll in this year, and the partners are aiming for 15% to 20% growth.

—Tanya Lewis