



AT THE HELM

Sean Vassilaros, COO; Matt Brown, president (seated); Vince Parry, chief branding officer; and Fabio Gratton, chief innovation officer

PERFORMANCE

Huge year as revenue exceeded \$25 million

HIGHLIGHTS

Acquired Y Brand

Landed AOR work from Endo, Genentech, Amgen and Vertex

Business in NY has tripled

Headcount increased from 95 in 2009 to 165 now

CHALLENGE

Making mobile work

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

Ignite Health

Digital shop continues coast-to-coast expansion by acquiring Y Brands

It was a huge year for Ignite Health. After two years of double-digit growth and the September acquisition of Y Brand, revenue soared past \$25 million for the Irvine-headquartered inVentiv agency.

“Digital market growth is outpacing growth in other areas for all agencies—we’ve been outpacing even the digital market growth rate by several points,” says president Matt Brown.

Brown attributes this to increased client budgets, a lot of AOR relationships, unique and innovative digital expertise and “the Fabio factor,” i.e. the “rare balance of passion, brilliance, humbleness and strong desire to do what’s right” that founding partner and chief innovation officer Fabio Gratton brings to the table.

Gratton laughs. “I would love to take credit,” he says. “We were at the right place at the right time, and we did the right thing. When Matt came onboard he turbocharged something that already had a great pace on it.”

Noting that digital agencies are often one of the last marketing agencies to get procured, Brown says the Y Brand acquisition has made for a “great partnership” that’s helping Ignite get in the door earlier.

“Last year we saw six or eight RFPs looking for branding and digital,” he adds. “Not full service, not multichannel—branding and digital. Y Brand has strong brand building, positioning and research capability. We think great branding and great digital are

going to drive brands in the future.”

Y Brand’s founder and president Vince Parry was named chief branding officer. Five-year Ignite veteran Sean Vassilaros was promoted to COO.

Total headcount increased from 95 in 2009 to 143. It’s up to 165 now. A move to the former Young & Rubicam and Wunderman building in Irvine nearly doubled the West Coast office space.

Business in the New York office has tripled in the last two years. Headcount there increased from 12 to 40. Brian Lefkowitz, formerly of Digitas Health, joined as chief creative officer in New York last month. The New York office is also slated to move to a bigger space.

New AOR assignments included Endo Pharmaceuticals’ Lidoderm and Fortesta (won in 2011); Genentech’s Lytic franchise (iAOR); Amgen’s Neulasta and Nplate (iAOR); Vertex’s unbranded hepatitis C initiative (iAOR); and Edwards LifeSciences (several franchises).

Gratton says the focus for last year included helping clients through challenges such as patent expirations and regulatory and healthcare reform changes.

The agency formalized its innovation process internally as a working group (Ignite Media Labs) and as an offering that’s being used to help clients devise everything from new sales models to new services. Gratton came up with the idea to offer clients a “Golden Ticket” for an innovation session (in Ignite’s office and on its dime) addressing any challenge they choose.

Technology is core to all clients’ business, and Gratton says it’s key to their evolution.



Above: A game using different technology so kids can ‘shred’ diabetes and learn facts about type 1 diabetes

“Developing solutions that integrate with multiple systems is so important,” he explains. “Clients want everything to talk and connect, be extremely intelligent, and they want to see the value. Having a tech enterprise mindset is critical. We help clients think through their entire tech infrastructure.”

The agency is making significant investments in mobile, including the acquisition this year of San Diego shop Syndicated Methods.

Gratton stresses that mobile isn’t about shrinking content and programs to fit.

“We’re thinking about how customers consume information what healthcare looks on mobile,” he says. — Tanya Lewis

“Clients want everything to talk and connect, be intelligent and they want to see value”

—Fabio Gratton