

# Medicus Life Brands

Agency gets new branding, lands blockbuster Abbott biologic

**“When [clients are] under pressure, with tighter margins, promotional dollars come under greater scrutiny”**

—Lisa Ebert

The Medicus Life Brands red “M” has ceased to be the agency’s sole identifying mark. It’s giving way in a branding switch designed to tighten the alliance with other shops in the Publicis Life Brands global network. The Publicis lion head has become the agencies’ new common visual identity, and the agency is no longer referring to itself as Medicus Life Brands but will be known as Medicus, a Publicis Life Brands company.

The changes, neither of them structural, occurred this past May as part of an effort to unify the agencies within the network, which is part of Publicis Healthcare Communications Group (PHCG). Network partners in the US, Canada and Japan that have held onto the Medicus name can now be more closely identified with offices in Europe that have been operating as Publicis Life Brands the last few years.

With Medicus seeing an uptick in global activity, it’s a good time to try and make the offering more recognizable around the world. Medicus notched the global business for pre-launch brand dapagliflozin, AstraZeneca/Bristol-Myers Squibb’s diabetes drug

that has been filed in the US and EU. “We were asked to pitch based on our strong metabolic experience,” says managing director Lisa Ebert. “We pride ourselves on understanding the patient-physician dynamic, and in this category, that is critical.”

Overall, the year brought a mix of organic and new business wins ranging from high science and primary care agents, to mature brands and pipeline prospects, as well as opportunities for the full-service shop to showcase its expertise in Rx-to-OTC switches and social media. Medicus emerged with incremental business accounting for 20% of total 2010 revenue, and the agency hit pay dirt in eight out of every 10 pitches.

“Clients are feeling pressure, and it’s ever-increasing,” says Ebert, who cites her agency’s performance in the face of this continual budget stress as its biggest success this past year. “When they’re under pressure, with tighter margins, promotional dollars come under greater scrutiny.”

Among its wins, the agency landed the professional account for one of the industry’s biggest brands—Abbott’s rheumatoid arthritis biologic Humira, which posted \$6.5 billion in worldwide sales last year (\$2.8 billion of it coming from the US). PHCG sibling Saatchi Wellness holds the consumer account.

Medicus touts deep understanding of the professional influence in the OTC segment, in which it has more than 30 years of experience working on brands like Prilosec OTC, Metamucil and Crest. Ebert’s crew leveraged that understanding while planning this year’s multichannel Rx-to-OTC switch campaign for Sanofi’s Allegra, working seamlessly with sister shop Saatchi Wellness, which did much of the DTC work.

“Once it gets to the shelf, there are all these influencers,” explains Ebert. “Our job is to help purchase decisions by garnering the professional recommendation.”

HCP activity for the cross-channel launch included a website, mobile physician alerts, print personal sell-



**Above: A professional ad for Abbott’s biologic Humira, indicated for moderate to severe rheumatoid arthritis**

ing tool and convention exhibits, among other tactics. “Switch expertise is something we’re building a lot of strength in,” Ebert says. For multichannel programs, the agency can tap into PHCG bespoke tools designed to help brands allocate spend most effectively.

In the loss column, Auxilium decided to pull its

Testim business, for which Medicus did a multichannel disease awareness campaign integrating outdoor advertising with mobile, web and e-mail marketing. (The agency still runs the professional launch for Xiaflex, Auxilium's treatment for Dupuytren's contracture.) Ditto for King (now Pfizer) hemostatic agent Thrombin-JMI. "We did not make the consolidation," explains Ebert of that loss.

To bolster its cross-channel ability further, Medicus hired Julie Spoletti, SVP, director of relationship marketing. She brings extensive experience in consumer and professional relationship marketing and will focus on shaping physician/patient dialogue by creating innovative multichannel ideas.

**Above: A pre-launch ad from Bristol-Myers Squibb/AstraZeneca for dapagliflozin, for type 2 diabetes**

Another new joiner is Carol Nordin, community manager for The Bakery, the firm's digital offering that launched last year to be Medicus' center of excellence in social media. Nordin is tasked with not only listening for insights in conversations happening on Facebook, Twitter and blogs, but also engaging and responding. According to Ebert, the latter is a point of differentiation from other healthcare agencies.

One mature brand to become a new professional advertising account for Medicus was AstraZeneca migraine treatment Zomig, now in need of non-personal promotional work including online and direct mail.

Additional organic growth came from United Therapeutics and its division Lung Rx, for their pulmonary arterial hypertension franchise.

Medicus also won the US assignment for Boehringer Ingelheim's oncology franchise, including compounds afatinib and BIBF 1120, in a network pitch

that involved several other offices now handling the global work.

Like many of its peers, the agency is seeing added work helping clients make the switch to iPads for personal and non-personal selling. Its ongoing launches involve Shire's VPRIV (Gaucher disease), Shionogi's Kapvay (ADHD) and Cuvposa (excessive drooling in patients with neurological conditions), as well as Procter & Gamble's ProHealth Gingivitis System.

The foregoing has accounted for a 40% uptick in agency headcount. Ebert says Medicus has been able to staff up very quickly. "When there was a recession, we were experiencing trouble filling spots because people weren't moving in their jobs; they were not

**Above: A professional ad from the Rx-to-OTC switch campaign for Sanofi's Allegra, for allergy relief**

as mobile," she recalls. "We're seeing an opening up of the marketplace."

One perk to working at Medicus is the agency's continuing education program, CME (coaching, mentoring and education)—its way of bringing the latest and greatest information to employees. Staff are also encouraged to explore other industries beyond healthcare to determine how the latest technologies can be leveraged, and to attend events like the annual SXSW music, film and interactive conference for inspiration.

Like her peers, Ebert understands that the full-service healthcare agency has morphed into the multichannel full-service agency. As dollars continue to shift from print media to interactive and digital, "I don't think you'll speak to any managing director of a full-service agency who won't say that the strength of your business has to be grounded in multichannel. That's the world we're living in." — Marc Iskowitz



**AT THE HELM**

Nick Manganiello, chief creative officer; Lisa Ebert, managing director; and Rich Norman, chief strategic officer

**PERFORMANCE**

Landed eight out of every 10 pitches; headcount up 40%

**HIGHLIGHTS**

Changing name to Medicus, a Publicis Life Brands company, to unify itself within the Publicis Life brands network

Incremental business accounted for 20% of total 2010 revenue

Landed professional account for Abbott's Humira; planned the multichannel Rx-to-OTC switch campaign for Sanofi's Allegra

Organic wins came in from: United Therapeutics and Lung Rx

Notable hires: Carol Nordin, community manager for The Bakery (Medicus' digital offering); and Julie Spoletti, SVP, director of relationship marketing

**CHALLENGES**

Lost Auxilium's Testim business and King's Thrombin-JMI

Strengthening agency with multichannel work

Surviving consolidations

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