



AT THE HELM

Ryan Abbate, president

PERFORMANCE

Billings up 16% to all-time high of \$44 million

HIGHLIGHTS

Launched NeurogesX's Qutenza patch, three Allergan Eye Care products

Expanded business with Allergan: won the US business for a new indication for Botox and was awarded AOR status for Restasis

Named AOR for Bausch + Lomb Surgical

CHALLENGE

Stretching budgets to give clients what they need without added cost

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

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—Ryan Abbate

Pacific Communications

Firm’s revenue hits an all-time high, on the back of launches and new work

As the economy was crumbling, Pacific Communications president Ryan Abbate reigned in expenses and was cautious about expectations. He’s been pleasantly surprised two years in a row. Product launches and new business drove billings up 16% to an all-time high of \$44 million.

“It was by far the best year ever,” Abbate says. “We hadn’t forecasted for last year to be much of a growth year. Most of our clients exceeded expectations, and we had a lot of new business wins and new launches.”

Launch highlights included NeurogesX’s Qutenza patch (neuropathic pain management after shingles) and three Allergan Eye Care products.

Business with Allergan expanded to include Sanctura XR (overactive bladder); another urology group product (yet unnamed); and its newly acquired Lastacast (ocular allergy treatment). Pacific also won the US business for a new Botox indication (chronic migraine). Abbate notes Botox is “like a pipeline and a product.”

Other new additions to the roster last year included ev3 (endovascular devices); consulting company Health Strategies Group; and Edwards Life Sciences Critical Care.

In March 2011, the agency was awarded AOR status for Allergan’s Restasis (chronic dry eye). Abbate says it’s Allergan’s biggest brand and Pacific’s biggest win in many years. This year the agency was also named AOR for Bausch + Lomb Surgical (device portfolio).

Interactive capability continued to expand, and Pacific is doing more consumer work than in the past. Abbate says the agency has benefited from clients’ recognition of the value the “brand stewardship” concept of having one shop handle interactive, DTC and professional work. “Some of the clients have been burned or penalized a bit by sectioning off so much of their business,” he explains. “They’ve come to realize that your AOR, where institutional knowledge of your product resides, is probably your best bet for providing content in all forms of engagement. We’ve always been very high on brand stewardship concept, and I think the market has come around.”

Abbate feels everyone is functioning in a more disciplined way on this side of the recession. He notes costs are still a major issue and clients want to get as much as they can for their money. Unanswered questions about healthcare reform are also lending an air of uncertainty. The incorporation of “all things digital” is the biggest industry trend he sees.

“Digital is growing and has become ubiquitous,” he



Above: A journal ad for Allergan’s Botox, indicated to improve muscle tone for patients with limb spasticity

says. “A lot of walls are coming down between traditional print work and digital. There’s an in-between stage going on right now. It’s not perfect. Interactive isn’t well understood yet by a lot of people. It’s complicated, costly, and the production approach is different than what we’ve done before. Clients are coming to grips with the costs and timeline associated with interactive.”

Finding great talent is an ongoing big challenge. Abbate recruits from both Chicago and the east coast, and expects to hire another 20 this year.

“There’s no magic to this business—you hire the best people,” he adds. “I’m hoping to end 2011 up about 10% at the top line. We’d forecast a lower number, but I’m thinking 10% is likely given we’ve already achieved significant new business. We’re not pitching a lot right now—only because we’re still staffing against new business. We’ll be in new business mode in this summer.” —Tanya Lewis