



AT THE HELM

Al Topin, president

PERFORMANCE

Last year saw a 10% revenue increase

HIGHLIGHTS

Established formalized partnership with Advanced Clinical Concepts

New work includes the global launch of a Beltone product and corporate assignment from Terumo Cardiovascular Systems

Won work for Myriad Genetics' OnDone

CHALLENGE

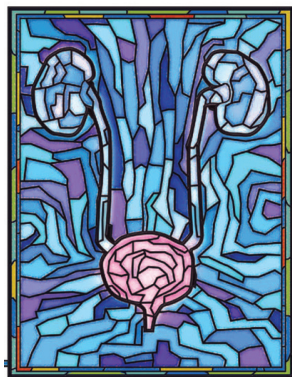
Not neglecting traditional media in favor of digital

Attracting the right talent

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

Topin & Associates

Cautious clients and new business helped Chicago shop stay steady



Though clients were still a bit cautious last year, Topin & Associates president Al Topin says new account wins and organic growth drove a 10% revenue increase for the Chicago-based agency.

“Clients have been breathing a bit better, but they’ve learned to keep budgets tight,” he adds. “Generally, there’s a more positive attitude within the industry, and agencies [are benefiting] from that.”

Highlights last year included establishing a formalized partnership with New Jersey-based medical communications agency Advanced Clinical Concepts (ACC). Topin & Associates and ACC first worked together about five years ago on Azilect, Teva Neuroscience’s Parkinson’s Disease treatment, for which they integrated and streamlined science-based promotional educational programs with rep-based communications. The two are working together on additional business, but they remain separate companies.

“I felt it was important to grow this relationship so we have a much broader offering,” he says. “The need has become more important on both sides. With separate resources, often the ad and promotion side does one thing, and the science side does another, and you lose what we call a science bridge. [When we work together] the client gets much better message consistency.”

New business wins included the global launch of a new Beltone hearing product and a corporate assignment from Terumo Cardiovascular Systems. The agency also picked up Uribel, an analgesic/antispasmodic for urinary pain, from existing client Mission Pharmacal, and Quest Diagnostics awarded a number of additional assignments.

While Topin notes significant growth in digital capability, assignments and programs, he stresses the need for digital to be rooted in strategy. And, he doesn’t think it’s wise to neglect traditional media.

“Digital is the great plus and a great opportunity, but it remains sometimes misleading,” he explains. “Clients shouldn’t launch an app just because a peer did. They should launch an app because it links to a strategy and something they want to achieve. The agency’s role is to ensure what’s now considered ‘the next thing’ in tactics is appropriate for the brand and the need. Agencies also need to continue to demonstrate value and play a role at the strategy level. Between payers, access to doctors, regulatory and compliance issues, and change in patient demographics, the strategy component is critical. Let’s not forget what traditional media can do. I’m not saying there’s anything wrong with digital—you just have to be sure that common sense prevails.”

High levels of unpredictability surrounding regulations and healthcare legislation are ongoing issues for all clients, and Topin believes those issues are “equally critical and as important as all the noise

Deliver
the patient-friendly oral iron therapy

Ferralret 90
Comfort your patients will love

Comfort and effectiveness— a winning combination

The iron that can help them meet your therapeutic goals:

- Proven oral iron formulation with proven absorption for maximum efficacy and comfort and a gentle, non-irritating formulation
- Proven formulation with proven safety, tolerability and a proven record of efficacy

Unconventional “benefits” at work

- No constipation
- No nausea
- No stomach pain
- No dark stools
- No metallic taste
- No GI irritation
- No GI discomfort
- No GI discomfort

Gentle and effective treatment

- One who doesn’t irritate the sensitive lining of the stomach, unlike oral iron
- No constipation, no nausea, no stomach pain, no dark stools, no metallic taste
- No GI irritation, no GI discomfort, no GI discomfort

Affordability to improve the patient’s experience

- Available in a 90-day supply (up to 90 in each of their own)
- 120 capsules, 60-day supply (up to 60 in each of their own)
- No GI irritation, no GI discomfort, no GI discomfort

Above: A professional ad for Mission Pharmacal’s Ferralret 90; Top: Part of a journal ad for Mission’s Uribel

“There’s a more positive attitude within the industry, and agencies [are benefiting] from that”

—Al Topin

levels of digital.”

Attracting the right kind of talent continues to be a challenge. Headcount is currently 32, up two from 2010. Topin is looking to hire one or two more on the account and creative sides. Abby Mansfield was promoted to SVP creative director last year. To help ensure integration, all creative employees and digital director Barclay Missen now report to her.

The agency is currently working on a number of pitches. It recently won Myriad Genetics’ OnDose, a molecular diagnostic test for oncologists. Topin expects to close 2011 up again—though not dramatically.

“The industry isn’t roaring back,” he says. “Clients are investing in the products they have, and hopefully we’re going to get our fair share.” —Tanya Lewis