



AT THE HELM
Lorna Weir, president

PERFORMANCE
A “launch” year

HIGHLIGHTS
Launched Dendreon’s Provenge, BTG’s operations, Alkermes new indication for Vivitrol, Lundbeck’s Xenaxine (re-launch), Kowa’s Livalo and Labopharm’s Oleptro

Established relationship with Horizon Pharma and nonprofit Council for Affordable Quality Healthcare

Expanding services and offerings

CHALLENGE
Lost Cephalon PR work

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

“When you think about what a launch demands in terms of planning, that kind of dominated everything”

—Lorna Weir

Vox Medica

A slew of launches, organic growth and new work keeps shop busy

Over the course of the last 12 to 18 months, Vox Medica did all the stuff that agencies usually do. It went after and snared new business. It added and subtracted staffers. It liberally submitted its work for awards consideration. But mostly, Vox’s attention was focused on one task: launching new products into the pharma ecosystem.

“We did so many launches last year, all on accelerated timelines,” says Vox president Lorna Weir. “When you think about what a launch demands in terms of timing and planning, that kind of dominated everything else.”

Dendreon’s Provenge, for prostate cancer, came first, followed in swift succession by projects for BTG International (the launch of BTG’s operations in the US, plus the launches of CroFab for snake venom and DigiFab for toxicity); Alkermes (a new dependence indication for Vivitrol); Lundbeck (the relaunch of Xenaxine, for Huntington’s chorea); Kowa Pharmaceuticals America (the launch of Livalo, a statin); and Labopharm (the launch of depression drug Oleptro).

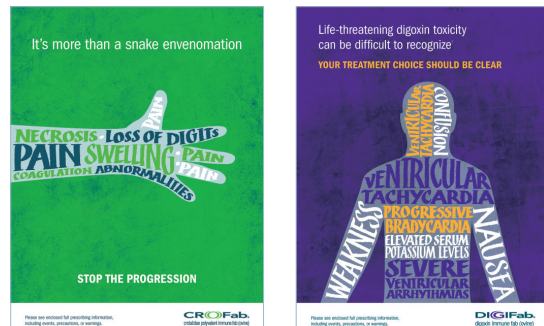
If that is exhausting to read, well, think about how much more exhausting it must’ve been to live through. Asked about the strain the launch schedule effected on her staff, Weir answers matter-of-factly: “Of course it

was a challenge, but we like to think we didn’t sacrifice strategy and thoughtfulness along the way.”

Weir credits the entire Vox team for “staying focused and staying hungry” during the launch avalanche, but acknowledges a tremendous amount of pressure, self-imposed and otherwise. “It’s wonderful that our clients are looking to us to support them more than before,” she explains. “It’s the balance you have to watch out for—taking care of them the way they need and deserve, but also managing and thinking about the agency and the business we’re in.”

To that end, Weir is proud of the organic growth Vox enjoyed during the last year, because of what it says about the level of service the firm has delivered. “A lot of our clients came in through one of our practices or specialties, then found that we can support them in other ways,” she says. “It’s good for them and it’s good for us. It more or less eliminates the learning curve of working with somebody new.”

Which isn’t to say that Vox didn’t push forward aggressively on the new-business front. It established a relationship with Chicago-based Horizon Pharma and with the Washington, DC-based nonprofit Council for Affordable Quality Healthcare. For the latter client, which counts as its primary goal simplifying healthcare administration, Vox was asked to take a slightly different approach. “It’s rare that we look at healthcare that way—focusing on the system rather than on a product,” Weir says.



Above: Launch ads for BTG International’s CroFab for snake venom (left) and DigiFab for toxicity (right)

The agency only lost a single client: Cephalon, when a PR assignment around the company’s pain franchise came to an end. While Weir describes the conclusion of the three-year-long relationship as “unfortunate,” she takes solace that Vox’s work for the company was recognized with a host of awards.

In the months ahead, Vox hopes to expand both its offerings and its skill set. Headcount sits at 100, as it did at this time last year, but Weir notes that “the complexion of our staff, in terms of strengths in various specialties, has changed.” Also look for the firm to promote its expertise in helping clients sail through murky regulatory waters. “I’m a former attorney and I have a great deal of interest and passion for this,” she continues. “Helping clients have a better understanding of those issues is a big priority for me personally and for Vox as a company.” —Larry Dobrow