



AT THE HELM

Steve West, CEO and chief creative officer

PERFORMANCE

After a flat 2011, the agency expects a 20% revenue bump this year

HIGHLIGHTS

Officially placed its focus on the orphan and rare-disease space

Added such clients as Alexion and Amylin

CHALLENGES

Getting doctors to put more effort toward diagnosing and treating rare diseases

Bringing patient communities together around new treatments

For contact details, service offerings and client roster, see Agency A-to-Z, beginning on page 181

Cambridge BioMarketing

Finding a path to success by following the road less taken



Cambridge BioMarketing, over the course of its ten-year history, had rarely pushed aggressively to add big-brand, blockbuster-to-be products to its roster. The reason? It didn't seem prudent for a moderately sized firm to marshal its (comparatively) small amount of resources for client derbies against agencies five or ten times its size. "We always wanted to have a clear positioning," says Cambridge CEO and chief creative officer Steve West. "The whole, 'Hey, we're a healthcare agency. You got work? We'll do it!' thing never seemed very appealing. We've always chased something besides billing."

To that end, Cambridge had long distinguished itself in the specialty-product space—and in the summer of 2011, the agency made a decision towards which it had been moving, deliberately or otherwise, for some time. It officially focused its attention on the orphan and rare-disease space.

West believes the subtle shift in positioning makes great business sense, in the contexts of both Cambridge's personnel/expertise and the pharma market at large. "Listen, we chose it because we're good at it. We have more experience than anybody," he says. "At the same time, the orphan/rare disease space is one of the few in the business that's thriving. It's not just smaller or mid-sized companies—Big Pharma sees the potential as well." He points to Pfizer, Novartis and

GlaxoSmithKline as three of the global behemoths that have shown more than a passing interest in the space.

"Some people say that at some point all diseases are going to be orphanized: You're not going to be treated for high cholesterol anymore; you'll be treated for high cholesterol type six," West continues. "There will be specific drugs and treatments. We're already seeing this in oncology."

But the new agency orientation also brought new obstacles. Such drugs are quite expensive, with some products costing upwards of \$200,000 a year. Physicians tend not to be focused on super-rare conditions. And patient distribution is random; some of the diseases only affect a few thousand people on the planet.

This presented Cambridge with a host of challenges, both in terms of physician and patient communications. "With doctors, you're not competing against other drugs in a category; you're competing against all other diseases the doctor routinely treats. You have to find a way to motivate them to look for it," West explains. Plus, afflicted patients are both few in number and impossible to pinpoint geographically. "You have to create patient communities; it's not like the communities are out there and all you have to do is access them. When a company comes up with a drug, you have to pull patients together around the treatment."

Cambridge has proven adept at such difficult assignments. Now that the new focus has taken hold, West expects a 20% revenue bump in 2012, following a flat 2011. Recent client additions include Inspiration



Promoting Rare Disease Day (above left) and awareness of Hypophosphatasia (above)

Biopharmaceuticals (two hemophilia-focused products and corporate work), Alexion Pharmaceuticals (for asfotase alfa, which treats the metabolic bone disease Hypophosphatasia), Amylin Pharmaceuticals (for Lipodystrophy drug Metreleptin) and the National Organization of Rare Diseases (on a pro bono basis). The new business from Inspiration replaces Cambridge's previous work on Biogen Idec's hemophilia franchise.

"I guess you could call us experts," West deadpans. "But really, we're still learning. The playbook for these assignments is still being written. Job security is being good at what you do." —Larry Dobrow

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