



AT THE HELM

From left: Partners Patrick O'Shea, Andy Pyfer, Jaime Butler-Binley, Ed Mitzen

PERFORMANCE

40% growth so far this year

HIGHLIGHTS

Undertook its first international launch for Alimera Sciences' Iluvien

New work from Upsher Smith and Covidien

Building a new office in Saratoga Springs

CHALLENGES

Finding the right people to fit the agency's unique profile

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

FingerPaint Marketing

An upstart no more, this firm mixes creative freedom with rapid growth



For FingerPaint Marketing, the past year was one of validation. The agency is now on firmer ground in large part due to launch work for some small to mid-size clients and their growing reputation as a niche, digital shop. "2011 was a launchpad year for us," says agency partner Ed Mitzen. "We went from being a start-up to a fully functioning, profitable business. Now, we're in a position where we can invest in the company and add different people in a lot of key areas."

A founder of Palio, Mitzen is no stranger to the hardships of building a business from the ground up. Having started FingerPaint in 2008 in the midst of an economic downturn has taught him and his agency the importance of staying efficient. "We began as a digital agency," he says, "and because we had to operate lean and mean from the start, we were able to build a way of getting things out the door that was very efficient."

This perspective has proved helpful. The agency has grown from \$4.3 million in revenue in 2011 to \$6 million so far for 2012. And while this 40% upswing may be creating its own set of challenges, they're not dreadful problems to have. "I think one of our chal-

lenges is finding the right types of people to fit our model. There's no titles, there's no offices, that's not for everybody. And I think bringing in more talent is going to be key to our future success," notes Mitzen. FingerPaint also plans on building a new office in Saratoga Springs, NY, in the near future to help accommodate new staff.

In 2011, FingerPaint saw its first international launch for Alimera Sciences' Iluvien, a corticosteroid indicated for the treatment of vision impairment associated with chronic diabetic macular edema. Among the pieces of new business coming in this year, FingerPaint counts pre-launch and launch work from several mid-size clients. The agency is currently working on a treatment for epilepsy from Upsher Smith, in the CNS space, which is in pre-launch and the name has yet to be determined. They also picked up work from Covidien, for their pain drugs, Pennsaid and Exalgo.

"We're very uniquely positioned," Mitzen offers, "Many of our clients are in that \$50-\$400 million sales range. They've got 35-300 sales reps. That's our sweet spot. We don't have any billion dollar brands we're working on. This is our niche business, where we can go in and demonstrate senior level critical thinking without burdening our clients with these enormous fees."

The agency is steadily keeping pace with the industry's not-so-subtle shift to digital. Nearly half of FingerPaint's work comes to the agency by way of professional and consumer digital services. And for Mitzen, this is nothing new, "Everybody's saying that right. If you're not doing sales iPad apps, you prob-



Above left: an iPad app for the Inomak vasodilator, above: an epilepsy-based effort for Upsher-Smith

ably shouldn't be in business. I don't know if you can even count it. It's just something you need to be able to do." And with the agency's digital team in-house, they are well-positioned to take on more mobile and digital projects.

Mitzen expects steady growth for the rest of 2012 and points out that his small-town approach to the agency world is catching on. "FingerPaint embodies that sense of creative freedom and joyful expression that we had when we were kids," he says, "that type of ethos I think is really resonating with people. The key is to keep it going as we continue growing." —Kevin McCaffrey

"If you're not doing sales iPad apps, you probably shouldn't be in business"

—Ed Mitzen