

# Publicis Life Brands Medicus

Creating customer experiences to  
build brands while driving growth



**“It is really important now to break through and engage our customers differently”**

—Lisa Ebert

**P**ublicis Life Brands Medicus, the flagship professional agency of Publicis Healthcare Communications Group (PHCG), has seen a modest uptick in business. Lisa Ebert, managing director, says that thanks to a clutch of new assignments, revenue is up for the 12 months to May vs. the previous 12-month period. With performance bordering on flat, there have been no major shifts in headcount.

“There have been some ups and downs. Overall, we’re in a great place,” she says. The wins, reflecting new and organic growth, came primarily in 2011.

The most high-profile of these, coming in the second half, has been Novartis’ multiple sclerosis franchise, US and global, encompassing the pill Gilenya and injection Extavia. It’s part of a network win in which fellow Publicis shops, including Rosetta, are chipping in.

Organic growth has included an investigational Abbott treatment for Parkinson’s disease and from AstraZeneca, AOR status for the Symbicort (asthma/COPD) digital business, as well as expansion within AZ’s respiratory portfolio with the Pulmicort Respules

and Flexhaler business. United Therapeutics’ division Lung Rx entrusted the drug Remodulin, which is the third product the agency now handles from that company’s pulmonary arterial hypertension franchise. And the agency expanded its 35-year relationship with Procter & Gamble, taking on project work in the cough-cold category for Vicks.

The agency’s social media offering, The Bakery, has also gained traction. “Thirty percent of our clients now are leveraging our community manager, the person on staff who manages the social space for us,” says Ebert. “We see that as a big win because, as social media and pharma are still trying to find their way, we continue to champion the value of it to inform their strategies.” The agency reports the following losses: Auxilium’s Xiaflex (Dupuytren’s contracture), along with Shionogi’s Kapvay (ADHD) and Cuvposa (excessive drooling in patients with cerebral palsy). In both cases, Ebert takes consolation in the fact that her agency was not singled out for poor performance. The agency switches were part of larger reorganizations implemented by the drugmakers.

Shionogi reorganized US leadership in 2010, while Auxilium shuffled CEOs in December after nearly two years of lackluster Xiaflex sales (\$42 million last year in the US). Xiaflex was approved in 2010 to treat a disease in which fingers are permanently bent inward. Ebert points out that her agency’s iPad work for the brand had sought to change surgeons’ mindset and get them to adopt the non-surgical procedure. While Auxilium has yet to crack that nut, “The work stands on its own,” she says.

The agency has also been handling global pre-launch duties for dapagliflozin, AstraZeneca/Bristol-Myers Squibb’s first-in-class SGLT2 inhibitor, now awaiting approval in the EU, where the CHMP issued a favorable decision in April. “What we did for this year was basically prepare the global market for the upcoming launch of the brand,” Ebert says, “educating about an entirely new way to treat type 2 diabetes.” In the US, the FDA had issued a complete response for dapa, and an AdCom had issued a negative vote last summer, possibly requiring new outcomes data.

Her shop has also been working on non-branded market preparation for the launch of the Boehringer Ingelheim oncology franchise, primarily one of BI’s compounds for targeted cancer therapy. The FDA requirement of utilizing biomarker testing as a condition of approval was a key focus.

Says Ebert, “Our digital strategist worked with BI’s team to really lead the development of a multi-channel strategy using online, mobile, search, and so forth just to ensure physicians engaged in best practices around biomarker testing.” The BI work stands as a good example of what the agency calls “total customer experience,” a mantra for going beyond the rational when tailoring messaging to customers. According to Ebert, “A lot of the work that we’re doing and a lot of what we’re pushing forward with is all about creating this very personalized customer experience that’s very comprehensive.” Experiences, as the agency defines



**AT THE HELM**

From left: Lisa Ebert (managing director), Rich Norman (chief strategic officer), Nick Manganiello (chief creative officer)

**PERFORMANCE**

Revenues up slightly for the 12 months to May vs. the previous 12-month period

No major shifts in headcount

**HIGHLIGHTS**

Growth includes an investigational treatment from Abbott for Parkinson's disease and AOR status for the Symbicort digital business

Social-media offering The Bakery has been gaining traction with agency clients

Working on non-branded market preparation for launch of the Boehringer Ingelheim oncology franchise

Created a just-launched app for risk prognosis in the PAH category for United Therapeutics

**CHALLENGES**

Capitalizing on the increased expansion of drugmakers' business beyond the Western market

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

Opposite page: Sanofi's Multaq on the iPad; Above: Two advertisements for Crest and Oral-B

them, not only address what customers think or do but how they feel. "Your product still has to do what it promises to; but we're trying to elevate engagement now by putting our customer in the center of our story." The point—as ever—is to build deeper brand loyalty, whether it's facilitating doctors' immersion in biomarker testing or some other goal. "There was

gies to life?' it's going to be a customer experience." To help drive this change, a new director of digital strategy, Jennifer Naylor, has been hired. "If we're going to push for creating a comprehensive experience that elevates engagement, technology has to be at the forefront," Ebert explains. Naylor has worked for the Euro network, as well as for Faith Popcorn's Brain Reserve, and her experience spans the consumer and professional realms.

Considering all the focus on engagement and customer experience, the agency has done a lot more work this year in the mobile space, both in iPad and handheld, she adds. For instance, her crew created a just-launched app for risk prognosis in the PAH category for client United Therapeutics.

How is 2012 business tracking? At press time, Ebert says there have been two wins, one for corporate branding, the other for an orphan drug launch. Overall, it's still a tough time for pharma. "You know, 2012 is going to be the year where the patent cliff is probably at its steepest, so leading up to 2012, there's just been more and more pressure from our clients." That affects agency work in the form of more budget constraints and fluctuations.

At the same time, patent expiries on blockbuster meds have been driving drugmakers to expand beyond Western markets and to partner more with small biotech. "When we pitch business now, more and more of our clients are looking for expertise in the emerging markets, so for us at Publicis that's a difference and a huge opportunity to differentiate ourselves." The agency plans to finish the year by continuing to try and build deeper relationships with its core audience on behalf of brands, even as the focus shifts in how and where that's done. Says Ebert, "That's the Holy Grail, no matter what." — Marc Iskowitz



A promotional piece urging oncologists to consider biomarker testing for advanced-NSCLC patients

a point where broadcast messaging was the game, and then, it was the two-way dialogue," says Ebert. "Now it's taking it to the next level of experiential and deep engagement. If you think about the journey that we're all going through, it is really important now to break through and engage our customers differently." Ensuring that the multiple channels in a campaign integrate with each other to create this holistic experience requires a shift in thinking. "My vision and hope is that we never use the phrase 'tactical plan' again," she says, "that as our teams think about, 'Okay, how are we going to bring our strate-