



AT THE HELM

Katy Thorbahn,
managing director

PERFORMANCE

Solid new-business numbers, including work for Rite Aid

HIGHLIGHTS

Formed a relationship with Publicis Healthcare Communications Group

Moved to new offices in Philadelphia's Wanamaker Building

CHALLENGES

Attracting the right talent

Selling clients on the agency's digital-centricism

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

“Digital experiences get brands closer to the customer”

—Katy Thorbahn

Razorfish Health

A new kid on the block uses its digital savvy to build a reputation



Razorfish Health was spun off into a distinct entity in 2010, a move questioned by some pundits. The recession had inflicted significant damage on firms with a long, distinguished track record, the thinking went. How could a relative newcomer to the space—“relative,” in that the Razorfish mothership did its share of healthcare/wellness work prior to the spin-off—establish itself amid the market tumult? “It wouldn’t be unfair to ask, ‘What were they thinking, timing-wise?’” says Razorfish Health managing director Katy Thorbahn, with a laugh.

Owing to the digital savvy that has long been Razorfish’s calling card, the health unit quickly distinguished itself as one of the most progressive-minded companies in the field. It did so by serving as a digital evangelist of sorts, one which attempted to make a case for leveraging digital tools and tactics as far more than a late-campaign add-on.

Potential clients, however, took some convincing. “For many years, we were in the position of arguing that digital was meaningful enough to pay attention to, to recognize that just having a bunch of digital things built doesn’t mean that you’re harnessing the power of digital,” Thorbahn says. “Now, clients are making the right types of investments. They’ve started to see that digital is a strategic channel. It’s not just a tactical

toolbox—like, ‘Okay, I’ve got my web site. Check.’”

That digital-first mindset has served Razorfish Health well. “We have a specific point of view on the world,” is how Thorbahn puts it, noting that digital strategies and tactics help create experiences that change peoples’ lives. And it’s not all about driving sales and awareness: “We’re sitting down with clients to think about using some of the tools in the social-media landscape to drive better clinical trials and recruitment. There are so many business challenges in the health and wellness space that you just don’t see anywhere else.”

Razorfish Health enjoyed solid new business growth. The agency shies away from disclosing names and accounts—“I always say that we have the best client list that we can’t tell anyone about,” Thorbahn quips—but a bit of digging reveals that the firm diversified its base considerably during the last year. Rite Aid tapped Razorfish Health for a multi-year program designed to layer digital strategies and tactics onto the pharmacy chain’s in-store experience. Genomma Lab Internacional, a client based in Mexico, hired the firm to build a health/wellness web portal for Latin American consumers.

Razorfish Health has grown in other ways, moving into more spacious digs in Philadelphia’s Wanamaker Building and allying itself with the Publicis Healthcare Communications Group network. At the same time,



Helping the Rite-Aid in-store experience go digital (above left), the Pew Health Group site (above)

Thorbahn acknowledges that the agency faces a pair of challenges in the months ahead. The first isn’t exactly unique to Razorfish Health: “The talent we need generally isn’t the guy you find in the building next door.” Too, Thorbahn freely admits that the company still needs to sell clients on its digital-centricism.

“What I hope to be telling you is that we were successful in moving more clients to understand that digital is a hugely strategic part of the business, as opposed to, ‘Oh, I’m doing digital because I have a mobile app,’” she says. “Digital experiences get brands closer to the customer.” —Larry Dobrow