



AT THE HELM

Peter Labadie, CEO

PERFORMANCE

Revenues were up last year, and headcount held steady

HIGHLIGHTS

Digital “Mystery Case” campaign for Astellas’s Lexiscan

Made its first move into the dental market

Moved to Chicago’s Merchandise Mart

CHALLENGES

Reintegrating the agency’s speaker management business

Lost Ganedin, Medicis and Wellesse

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

“Clients want to be quick and smart and not spend a lot of money on paper”

—Peter Labadie

Williams Labadie

Chicago agency reintegrates old business and moves into new areas



Williams Labadie, a Chicago-based agency owned by Publicis Healthcare Communications Group (PHCG), evolved last year as it reintegrated speaker management business that had been moved to another PHCG agency in 2008.

“It’s 30% of our business now,” CEO Peter Labadie says. “It’s probably been the biggest area of growth in the last year or so. Reintegrating the speaker group forced us to reposition, and it’s been all for the better, but it’s one of the biggest challenges. It’s easy to reposition clients. It’s hard to reposition yourself. We learned a lot in the process.”

The theme of the new positioning is “measurable brand engagement,” emphasizing key overlaps between the speaker management skill set and the more traditional agency skill set—measurability and engagement. The new positioning launched externally this year and coincided with a move to Chicago’s historic Merchandise Mart, near other PHCG agencies.

About 70% of the agency’s work is now digital. A relationship program for APP Pharmaceuticals’ anesthetic Naropin (won in 2010) and a digital “Mystery Case” HCP campaign for long-time client Astellas’s cardiovascular diagnostic Lexiscan were among last year’s digital highlights.

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a lot of money on paper,” Labadie says. “Even bigger clients are going to digital. Anything that has value in digital will take priority.”

The agency made its first foray into dental work last year after landing AOR status for three products from Dentsply/Tulsa Dental Specialties (Ankylos, GuttaCore, and Vortex Blue). Corporate work was won this year. “The work has parallels to both pharma and device business, so we can bring a lot of our background...to bear,” Labadie explains.

New work from Astellas included AOR for promotional and digital work on Vaprisol (cardiovascular) and project work for its urology speakers program. The agency also won professional promotional business for 1-800-Doctors; rolled over speaker contracting business for AstraZeneca; and bid and won an assignment to revamp PHCG’s corporate web site. This year, physician, nurse and nuclear-tech speaker management efforts expanded in support of Lexiscan.

OTC probiotics company Ganeden was lost after it was acquired. Corporate project work with Medicis and work on Botanical Laboratories’ Wellesse (OTC supplements) were both moved in-house.

Labadie reports revenue was up last year, and headcount held at about 55. A few have joined this year, and hiring hasn’t been as big of a challenge as anticipated. “Compared to prior years, there are number of good candidates, and an awful lot of good freelance people out there—especially in digital,” Labadie says.

Finding synergies between the speaker management side of the business and the rest of the business is a priority.



Going digital: Work for Lexiscan (above left) and the AMAGINE physician portal (above)

“I’m trying to find bridges between them and determine what strengths we can cross-pollinate,” Labadie explains. “For example, our strength in digital has helped us in doing digital enhancements for speaker presentations. The speaker business is very much compliance driven, so our digital team really supports development of speaker portal customization.”

This year is going well—revenue is up again, and the agency is pitching new speaker business.

“Every year people get a little less freaked about the recession, but I think the need to do more for less will always be there,” Labadie says. “I understand that. Wouldn’t we all want that?” — Tanya Lewis