

Kirk helms a rising research power

Though healthcare intelligence firm WorldOne is 12 years old, co-founder and CEO Peter Kirk feels like the company is “just getting started.” The acquisition of Sermo in July bolstered WorldOne on the US research front and expanded its interactive and digital opportunities. With Sermo’s 130,000 docs added in, the company’s HCP network is now a million strong in the US (1.8 million globally), and Kirk says engagements (i.e., link clicks or website visits), are up from 1.9 million in 2011 to three million this year.

“In the US, from a research point of view, Sermo and WorldOne combined give us critical mass, which the pharma industry wants,” Kirk explains. “We had good products but not enough mass in the US by ourselves. Through the Sermo acquisition we become a heavy hitter.”

If WorldOne is a force to be reckoned with, credit Kirk for deals like the Sermo buy, as well as ones with peers such as Physicians Interactive to strengthen his research panel. He’s assembled an impressive team, with Bert Janssen joining as EVP from CSD—CegeDim Strategic Data, and Matt Campion coming on board as president, North America, from Epocrates.

Kirk says the plan for Sermo is to let its community earn money through market research and to significantly expand the community locally and internationally. “Sermo’s core is truly bidirectional, and we were already moving in that direction,” he adds.

Prior to the purchase, engagement division WorldOne Interactive, which launched in 2011, developed some interactive products of its own. Examples include HCP social health gaming platform DocTANGO and the fast-response, self-service research portal MedLIVE. Kirk says that, three days after the Sermo buy, Sermo and WorldOne Interactive made a MedLIVE sale to a top-10 pharma company. The product delivered data in two hours, 14 minutes.

“Sermo and WorldOne combined give us critical mass, which the pharma industry wants”

Peter Kirk
CEO, WorldOne

2000-present
Co-founder and managing director to CEO, WorldOne

1993-2000
Stockbroker, Raymond James; partner, SKFG; business consultant, Swanholm Distribution; founder, Proaxis

In addition to expanding Sermo’s community engagement, Kirk says that WorldOne will “innovate via technology at new levels that haven’t been seen yet.” He says he’ll look to internationalize social capabilities sometime in 2013.

WorldOne was founded in 2000 in London after Kirk’s friend Ben Stephenson, a founding partner of Ashton Brand Group, realized there was no true one-stop shop for deriving data and insights from HCPs internationally. So they put up \$20,000 between them and started building a company. Stephenson, who became EVP, retired from the firm last year.

“We never took any investment until August 2011,” Kirk says. “We hired more than 30 call centers, and we had two call centers ourselves. Every year, we spend millions to keep expanding the global network. If I could do it again, I probably would’ve taken investors sooner and grown faster.”

Born in Copenhagen, Kirk spent a year in Charlotte, NC, as a high school exchange student. He attended Appalachian State University in Boone, NC, and earned a masters degree in finance from London Business School.

London was home base for Kirk and WorldOne until Kirk moved to Manhattan with his wife and two children in 2010. A third child was born last year. Kirk’s hobbies include collecting (and drinking) champagne, which he says his wife thinks is a better hobby than golf.

No other acquisitions are planned for 2012, but Kirk says there may be more coming. “My end game is to build a great company in healthcare via technology,” he explains. “At this moment, I don’t have a vision of going beyond HCPs. I feel there’s so much to do there—particularly internationally—that hasn’t been done yet. With technology and innovation, so much can evolve really fast, and it’s our goal to always push the envelope.” — *Tanya Lewis*



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