



AT THE HELM

Eric Prouty, chief officer

PERFORMANCE

Revenues dropped from \$26 million to \$22 million

HIGHLIGHTS

Several new projects came in, including AOR status on two franchises and project work on a pipeline oncology product

Significant growth in early 2013

Established partnership with UC Irvine School of Medicine

CHALLENGES

Loss of “blockbuster neuroscience products”

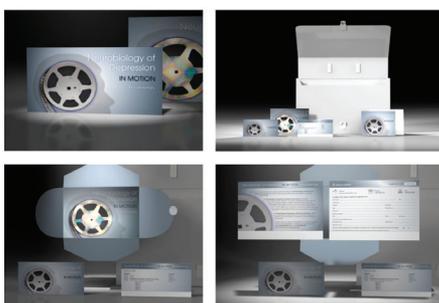
For contact details, service offerings and client roster, see Agency A-to-Z, beginning on page 187

“To remain competitive and relevant we needed to expand our thinking”

—Eric Prouty

Avant Healthcare Marketing

New business softens the blow of a few “blockbuster” departures



At DWA Healthcare Communications Group’s Avant Healthcare Marketing last year, the big theme was transformation. Patent expiry of several “blockbuster neuroscience products” significantly hit revenue, which fell from \$26 million in 2011 to \$22 million. Staff dropped from 165 in 2011 to 153.

The “blockbuster neuroscience products” are thought to be Eli Lilly’s Cymbalta, whose patent protection ends next year, and Zyprexa, which lost it in 2011.

Chief officer Eric Prouty says the agency was prepared for the challenges and launched a five-year transformation plan. “We recognize that to remain competitive and relevant we needed to expand our thinking and creative abilities around the idea of innovation,” Prouty explains. “To effectively execute on our long term strategy we made some investments and did some things differently in 2012 to set the stage.”

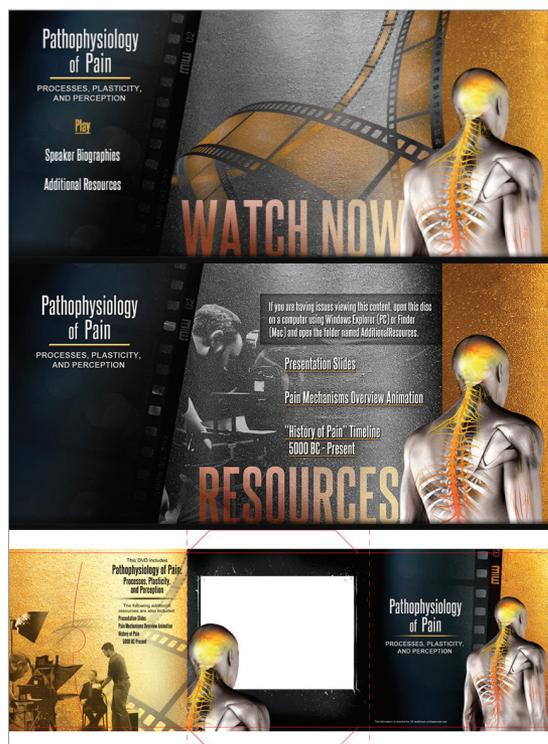
Sales and account teams were restructured in October to facilitate a more customer-centered approach and increase operational alignment and efficiency. A strategy and innovation group was formed this year. Rob Spalding is leading it as VP, strategy and innovation.

Spalding’s LinkedIn profile indicates he held positions at Eli Lilly from 2001 until February 2013. (Prouty spent 11 years at Lilly before joining Avant in 2007, per

his LinkedIn profile). “Rob will help us [drive] innovation internally and, more importantly, he’ll continue to dialog with clients and HCPs to better understand what patients are looking for in relationships with pharma, biotech, or device companies,” Prouty says.

The agency has also been busy establishing new partnerships, such as one with University of California Irvine School of Medicine, that can help deepen insights and expertise.

Though 2012 wasn’t great in terms of top-line revenue, it seems to have been pretty good in terms of new business. Prouty won’t reveal specifics, but says new work came in from “global pharma companies” that included a strategic retainer account for an oncology product. Relationships expanded with three clients to include AOR status on two franchises (diabetes and oncology), strategy retainer and project work on a pipeline oncology product and a preferred Master Services Agreement for meeting planning services.



Avant projects “Neurology of Depression” (above left) and “Pathophysiology of Pain” (above)

“It appears that a significant number of pharma and biotech companies are focused on five key growth areas: oncology, diabetes care, cardiovascular disease, autoimmune and CNS,” Prouty says. “There’s a lot more investment and focus and emphasis in these categories.”

According to Prouty, the agency won more business in the early part of 2013 than it did in all of 2012. “I’m proud that we have more clients today than we had even four months ago, and we expect that trend to continue based on our increased focus on diversifying our client and account mix,” he says. “We’re just in year one of our five-year plan, but we like what we’re seeing.” —Tanya Lewis