



AT THE HELM

Marcia McLaughlin (president and CEO), Michael Metelenis (chief creative officer)

PERFORMANCE

Revenue tracking up about 10%

HIGHLIGHTS

Won professional advertising and medical education AOR status for VVA treatment Ospheña

New work from AbbVie, GSK and Taro, with no losses

CHALLENGES

Facing an increased amount of competition from big network agencies

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

Centron

Tightly knit firm gets a big new space and new work along with it



Centron president and CEO Marcia McLaughlin is very excited to talk to *MM&M* this year from the agency's new, much larger office in Manhattan. Continued growth of between 10% and 20% last year prompted the move, which has "infused the agency with a sense of rebirth" as it enters its eighth year.

"There's nothing like a move to bigger, more beautiful space to ignite an agency," McLaughlin says. "The day we moved I told everyone to go home at 3 p.m. Half of my staff came straight to the new office and stayed until 3 a.m. helping move. It speaks to the camaraderie this agency has—even if people aren't needed, they'll show up to help."

Indeed, Centron is tight-knit. McLaughlin and chief creative officer Michael Metelenis worked together for 20 years at Omnicom shop KPR (which folded in 2008) before founding Centron, and many of the agency's senior leaders have long-standing working relationships. Newcomer Rob Perota joined last year from CDM as EVP, executive creative director.

"Bringing in someone who none of us knew isn't necessarily easy, but Rob's got the right personality," McLaughlin says. "He's really inspired creative and upped our game."

Overall, staff increased by five to 75 last year. There are 78 now and six openings across all levels.

McLaughlin also cites the agency's work, which includes professional advertising and medical education AOR status for Shionogi's new vulvar and vaginal atrophy (VVA) treatment Ospheña. "Ospheña is a ground-breaking product," she says. "VVA impacts the lives of many women and bringing this product to the market is a defining moment for Shionogi. It's been a wonderful experience for Centron to be part of the launch as AOR."

Much new business came on last year, with no losses. AbbVie awarded large-scale professional project work on its men's health franchise and promotion work for its hypogonadism clinical educators program. Along with HealthSTAR Vivactis Global Network (of which McLaughlin is president), Centron won US project work on GSK's Flolan (PPH). New client Taro awarded project work on Ovide (lice). The agency also began pro bono work for JED Foundation (suicide prevention).

Relationships expanded with Bayer, Eisai, OraPharma, Merz and Forest. Bayer assigned positioning project work on oncology product Stivarga, a follow-up product to Nexavar for which Centron is AOR. Eisai awarded work on two CINV products.

The agency pitched and won AOR status on cariprazine (a Ph. III antipsychotic) from long-time client Forest. OraPharma awarded medical education and advertising AOR status on Ossix Plus. Following the successful launch of Naftin 2% cream, Merz awarded Centron AOR status to launch Naftin 2% gel.



An iPad piece for Aloxi (above left) and the JED Foundation's "Love is Louder" campaign (above)

The agency is mostly pitching AOR work, which McLaughlin says is "bigger, broader and more integrated" now. She also reports increasing competition with large network agencies.

"Mid-size pharma companies call in mid-size agencies and usually one very large network agency for pitches," she says. "The large network agency presents a lot of bells and whistles, and the marketing directors are impressed except their budget could never afford all those bells and whistles. More often we're competing with large network agencies that are looking for business beyond big pharma clients as procurement makes winning more difficult for them."

Revenue is tracking up about 10%. Continuing to build global business through the HealthSTAR Vivactis Global Network is a priority. —Tanya Lewis

"It's been a wonderful experience for Centron to be part of the [Ospheña] launch"

—Marcia McLaughlin