



AT THE HELM

From left: Managing partners Chuck Wagner, Nina Manasan Greenberg, Andrew Gottfried, Roger Haskins

PERFORMANCE

Agency experienced continued rapid growth in 2012

HIGHLIGHTS

Added a VP of digital strategy and tweaked executive hierarchy

Announced opening of a second agency, Entrée Health Princeton

CHALLENGES

Dealing with the ongoing effects of consolidation and regulatory issues

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"There's a certain kind of energy that a new agency can give to clients"

—Chuck Wagner

Entrée Health

Positioned as niche leader, agency spreads its wings



Expecting perks comes with the territory when you're the largest agency in your given niche—especially when that niche ranks among the fastest growing in the industry. You can parade that distinction in front of existing and would-be clients. You can recruit behind it. You can, in many ways that matter, set your own course.

But the leadership of Entrée Health isn't in the business of taking anything for granted. "We're the largest pure payer agency in the United States, yes, and I think that's attractive to clients and folks within that competency," says managing partner Chuck Wagner. "But we're not immune to consolidation or regulatory stuff or anything else that other firms are dealing with."

That said, his fellow managing partner and Entrée creative director Nina Manasan Greenberg admits that the company "is fortunate on a couple counts." Most notably, payer marketing has become incredibly crucial to entities up and down the healthcare marketing food chain.

"Manufacturers realize that it's crucial for their success and for their brands. People in the industry realize that, for the sake of their careers, access and reimbursement is really important," she says.

This, if nothing else, helps explain Entrée's continued rapid growth at a time when some niche-less agen-

cies are struggling. They're also pretty good at their jobs, mixing marketing know-how with unparalleled knowledge of a very complex niche.

The firm upgraded its personnel in 2012, hiring its first VP of digital strategy (previously it had turned for help, whenever needed, to one of its CDM Group sister companies). "We're no longer sharing competencies," Greenberg says. It also tweaked its executive hierarchy, adding the title of managing partner to the business card of director of client services Andrew Gottfried, a longtime Entrée employee. "That was richly deserved," Greenberg adds.

In part to sate staffers who long for a turn in the captain's seat, Entrée is opening a second agency. Tentatively dubbed Entrée Health Princeton, the agency will operate independently of the Entrée Health mothership. Like the original Entrée Health, Entrée Health Princeton will focus on access and reimbursement marketing. Each company will have its own distinct management structure; the two firms will share nothing other than common CDM Group leadership. The new agency will be roughly a quarter of the size, in terms of head count, as its older sibling. That puts it somewhere in the 25-30 range.

"We'll be collegial competitors," Gottfried says.

Wagner acknowledges that "in many respects, we'll be targeting the same types of business with the same types of clients." So is there any worry about one firm getting in the way of the other?

No—well, not yet, anyway. Details are still being hashed out, but it seems as if there will be some degree

On Entrée Health's client roster in 2012: projects for (from left) Lucentis, FluMist and Alcon

of cooperation between the two agencies, just as there is between sister firms shielded under other holding-company umbrellas. "Decisions [on existing/new clients] will be made on a host of criteria. Who has the most expertise? Who has the most bandwidth?" Wagner explains.

Asked about the timing of the move and the extension of the Entrée Health brand—itself only a few years old—Wagner cites several motivating factors. "There's a certain kind of energy that a new agency can give to clients," he says. "Plus we have a number of rising stars in our organization. These folks need more and bigger opportunities. They need to be able to grow into the levels they're aiming at." —Larry Dobrow