



AT THE HELM

From left: Mark Arnold; EVP, managing director; Kevin McHale, EVP, executive creative director

PERFORMANCE

Double-digit revenue gains in 2012

HIGHLIGHTS

Won account for the Boehringer Ingelheim established brands unit, with \$4 million in work

Also brought Gilead's antiviral Viread on board

CHALLENGES

Pfizer's agency consolidation cost one account, and others could follow

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

NeON

A do-it-all approach proves to be a reliable path to steady growth

NeON has overseen three launches in the last 12 months, two of which it executed in an amazing seven months, vs. the typical two years agencies often get for new product intros.

The two expedited launches involved the professional debuts of Quilivant XR, the liquid ADHD drug Pfizer acquired in its 2012 buyout of NextWave Pharma, and for Pfizer Gaucher drug Elelyso.

"It started out as a matter of timing," says Mark Arnold, NeON EVP/managing director, about Quilivant, also a new account. "They couldn't bring on two agencies. We said, 'We'll do it all.'" Today, NeON is also doing the consumer work, while Drafftcb Healthcare sister shop Mosaic handles the payer work and Pro-Health the med ed. Adds Kevin McHale, EVP/executive creative director, "We managed to impress [Pfizer] out of the gate," rather than go through multiple rounds of concept development. NeON has since also built out its work on orphan brand Elelyso, now handling consumer.

The two launches "showed our mettle and forced our clients to make decisions," says Arnold.

The third launch was for Johnson & Johnson's Invokana, the first entrant in the SGLT2-inhibitor class of diabetes meds. NeON participates as part of an IPG network solution, handling the HCP brief while sister shop Hill Holliday runs consumer.

But NeON hasn't forgotten its sweet spot: multichannel work (e-mail deployment, direct mail, fax, samples) and back-end analytics for mature brands that have trimmed sales forces. Leveraging the job it's done for BP drug Micardis, NeON won the Boehringer Ingelheim established brands unit, snagging six more drugs and \$4 million in work: Aggrenox for stroke, Catapres for BP, Flomax for BPH, Mirapex for Parkinson's, Atrovent for asthma/COPD and Mobic for arthritis.

"When BI formed this [established products] group, it was a no-brainer for them to pick us," says Arnold.

"We not only did it with one of their brands but built a multichannel approach."

Arnold says the agency has had talks with three other pharmas that have stables of older brands. "Really, it's about maximizing their dollar," Arnold says. "They don't have huge budgets."

NeON's analytics prowess led to another new BI account, lung cancer candidate afatinib, and it rounded off its roster by winning Gilead antiviral Viread.

Percentage-wise, Arnold's crew enjoyed double-digit sales gains in 2012, and so far, he says, the agency is up by about 10% in 2013. Plans call for more organic growth. "Making the model work for itself," is how Arnold explains it. "We are on pace."

But there's an ironic hurdle: IPG is on the outs in Pfizer's agency consolidation, and the drug maker could remove two out of the three brands NeON launched in such spectacular fashion, plus established-products business. "We don't know what the effect will be,"

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From top: An ad for Janssen's Invokana, and a piece for Philadelphia chromosome CML testing

admits Arnold, "but we're prepping for it." It's already lost Pfizer's hospital injectables line, due to a change in management and agency consolidation.

Current work also includes a branded Facebook page for Novartis Oncology. Adds Arnold, "The trend has been more patient work. [Clients] are asking us to start to figure out 'how do we connect to the conversation, motivate the patient.'"

Headcount grew from 104 to 118 last year, including new joiner Tony Palazzo, SVP of analytics. The next big project doesn't involve a product. The agency is moving from its SoHo offices, which took up two floors, to larger quarters uptown. — Marc Iskowitz

"It's about maximizing their dollar. They don't have huge budgets"

—Mark Arnold