Digitas Health

Bringing multiple messages together into a single, successful strategy

Digitas Health tells its story and shows what it has to offer clients on its revamped website, which was created to provide an optimized multi-screen experience. That experience shows visitors to the site two things. One, that Digitas knows multiscreen is the way to go—and is aware that visitors know it as well. Two, it shows that Digitas takes the expectations of those visitors seriously. “We’re sort of walking the walk,” says Alexandra von Plato, president and global chief creative officer of Publicis Healthcare Communications Group.

It also provides insight about the flavor of the place—whose client roster includes Amgen, Athena Health, Genzyme, Gilead, Novartis, Pfizer, Sanofi, Shire and UCB—since it uses images submitted by Digitas employees at various offices. One such image was of the Philadelphia office’s popcorn popper. Von Plato and Publicis Healthcare Communications Group president Michael du Toit say the image of the popcorn bubbling to the top and spilling over the edge captures the essence of the Digitas mission that guides work on to the organic growth that continues to expand their client reach, and has contributed to the jump in business in the first quarter of this year, compared to the same period in 2012. The execs cannot share exact numbers, but say last year’s growth was in the double digits compared to 2011.

The movement isn’t strictly limited to growth that includes the recent launch of its office in India, or the plans to open doors in Japan and China by the end of the year, its goal to deepen its European presence or even the rollout of its second M-dot summit which brings together CEOs, venture capitalists, tech firms and Digitas to talk about the future.

The momentum also includes where clients are asking Digitas to assert its expertise and to leverage its global perspective. Creating M-dot also shows something unique about Digitas, which is that the company doesn’t restrict its investments to billable talent. In this

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—Alexandra von Plato
Another way to peer into the agency’s outreach expertise is the agency’s Group Hug project. This annual giving campaign lets employees tap into their networks to compete for votes; get enough people to support your organization of choice, and it wins. The response rate has been up to between 140,000 and 150,000 some years, from a base of 500 employees who “have lit up their entire social network,” and know how to make messages move.

The movement clients want and Digitas is providing is a multi-tiered conversation that converges at the point of sale but is hinged on the customer, not the brand. As an example, the agency says it helped a client with a high-priced specialty drug in a tight category show the drug’s value, by expanding the conversation. Now, such features as how much patients and payers save on out-of-hospital care when they use the product compared to after-care costs on other therapies are foregrounded, rather than leading and ending with the drug’s benefits. Although the presentation will vary slightly based on audience—doctor, patient, physician—du Toit says the key is that the communication arc created will be of a piece so everyone in the decision making process is “talking the same language” as it relates to the brand.

The company says it expects its early 2013 momentum to carry through the rest of the year. That momentum is expected to include an infusion of clients and talent as Digitas strives to be, as von Plato says, “at the forefront of change.” She adds that “our clients expect that of us and it’s a great position to be in if you enjoy pioneering.” —Deborah Weinstein