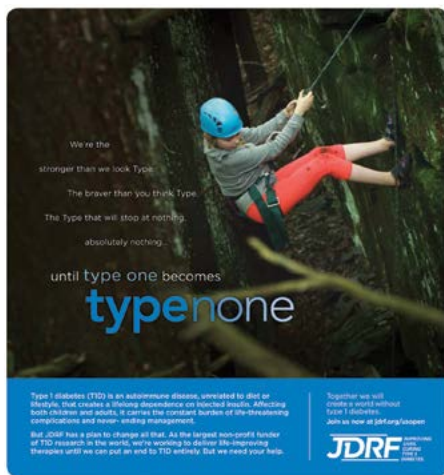


# GSW

With a major merger in the rearview mirror, focus is firmly on the future



**“We want to lead the market in making the human connection”**

—Joe Daley

**G**oing for a laugh isn't really the expected response to the first question in a wide-ranging interview with agency executives. But when a reporter asks GSW management, “How’s the merger with inVentiv Health sibling Blue Diesel going?,” they give an answer that consists of two rapid-fire one-liners.

“It’s going great because it’s done,” jokes Joe Daley, president. “I saw one sign left,” cracks Bruce Rooke, chief creativity officer.

One gets the sense that the administrative aspects of the merger have kept the executives quite busy over the last 18 months or so, but that the new GSW—with Blue Diesel having amped up both its technology and engagement prowess—has emerged as something perhaps bigger than the sum of its parts.

“We fully integrated and are operating around one brand and mission,” Daley says in all seriousness. “We have fully merged any clients and relationships, and we are well [on the way toward] realizing a new value proposition.”

While the Blue Diesel signs may have come down, the digital agency’s legacy execs have moved into key roles in GSW’s set of companies. Joel Gerber—is now GSW’s technology chief, and Andy Crawford—Blue Diesel’s former COO—is now in charge of running operations for the combined agency.

Another aspect of the merger that some may be inclined to overlook is how the two companies complemented each other. “Blue Diesel,” Rooke says, “was an entrepreneurial project shop, and that has a certain energy and discipline. GSW is 99% an AOR-big-capability-shop, and that has certain currents and rhythms. So to [fuse the two] makes our big battleship more nimble and able to answer a lot of different client needs.”

The next item up for consideration in the interview: GSW’s new vision and mission. Answers Daley, “We moved from [the tagline] ‘liberating ideas,’ which was about advertising, to this much larger concept of ‘speak people.’”

What precipitated the change in strategy, after 12 years of “liberating ideas?” Management took a hard look at the difference that healthcare advertising has made in the market. The conclusion they reached was that while pharma sales have gone up, patient compliance hasn’t kept pace.

“We dove into that gap,” says Daley of GSW’s response to those conclusions, “and asked ourselves, ‘Are we doing as much as we can to really bring people into a deeper, more practical understanding of what’s going on? And on the physician side, are we doing enough to create that dialogue?’”

Or, to frame the question in a different way, “In a world of accountable care, are we about advertising or something else?”

That something else moved the agency toward the idea of “speak people.” The processes that it’s put in place and the value it purports to bring is summarized in the thought “we want to lead the market in making the human connection.” That has less to do with being a professional, consumer or market-access shop as it does with what Daley calls “connecting constituencies together.”

Besides putting together a new image campaign and website—WeSpeakPeople.com—the new positioning entails a recalibrated launch approach. Brands should be built to create a relationship right from the start, says Daley.

That entails a go-to-market strategy involving social media, deep data and content marketing. “When you launch a brand with those elements,” he says, “it’s not like a compliance or CRM program on the back end, it’s how do we behave in a way that allows you to create those relationships and increase transactions at the same time.”

The agency’s greatest achievement in 2013, says Daley, was “defining and aligning and now implementing against the ‘speak people’ value proposition. It’s reshaping our company.”

That said, the majority of GSW’s work is still pro-

essional, as the physician accounts for the majority of promotional spend. However, the agency touts a much richer book of business than it had a few years ago, from HCP to consumer, pharma to device, and digital to non.

The organizational minutiae of coming together with another agency, layered on top of the new positioning work, could have thrown the agency off its game. But not so at GSW. The Columbus, OH, office helped execute one of the fastest pharma launches of all time, Biogen Idec MS drug Tecfidera, for which it's HCP and consumer AOR.

"We had less than 99 days to get ready for that from when GSW jumped on the Tecfidera train," says Daley. "And Columbus saw no barriers and rallied together. We put our best resources against the effort and the rest, as they say, is history."

Last year, GSW also managed to bolster relationships with existing clients, becoming HCP agency of record for several of their brands. The New York City office won Amgen psoriasis drug brodalumab, as well as its CV franchise, which includes ivabradine and AMG-145. The Columbus office, which was already



**Work for the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation (left) and Zeltiq's CoolSculpting procedure (above)**

Prolia's professional AOR, won another osteoporosis drug, romosozumab.

New York also grew with Eli Lilly oncology drugs necitumumab and ramucirumab, while Columbus added Elanco (Lilly's animal health division) and Baxter for its anesthesia portfolio including Suprane and several projects for Cardinal Health. The Toronto and Montreal offices added more work from Merck, Gilead, Celgene, Novartis and Pfizer.

"Increasing our strength and foundation around Amgen and Lilly was incredibly important," says Daley. "We continue to be incredibly focused on helping them succeed."

Fresh growth consisted of the New York office winning the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation and Zeltiq for its CoolSculpting fat-reduction device. Columbus won AOR for Alcon and Amedra Pharma, Pocket Protein for consumer marketing in the health/wellness space, and St. Jude Medical for DTP on its neuromodulation device.

Significant new wins since January 2014 include AstraZeneca bipolar med Seroquel XR, DTC for a



**PERFORMANCE**

Joe Daley, president

**PERFORMANCE**

Completion of the merger with Blue Diesel has resulted in an agency that is "fully integrated and operating around one brand and mission"

Significant new wins and a steady headcount of 525-550

**HIGHLIGHTS**

Became HCP agency of record for Amgen's brodalumab and for osteoporosis drug romosozumab

Expanded its business from such existing clients as Eli Lilly, Baxter, Merck, Gilead, Celgene, Novartis and Pfizer

New wins for Astra-Zeneca's Seroquel XR, a Forest Labs COPD drug and UCB's Cimzia

Growth from Alcon, Amedra Pharma, Pocket Protein, Zeltiq and the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation

Put together a new image campaign and website for the agency, WeSpeakPeople.com

**CHALLENGES**

Clients who "ask for the future and act in the current"

For contact details, service offerings and client roster, see Agency A-to-Z, beginning on page 183

Forest Labs COPD drug, and HCP AOR for UCB arthritis and Crohn's drug Cimzia.

The agency attributes the success so far this year to business development moves made last year. In Columbus, German Dziebel, internationally renowned business anthropologist, was installed as EVP, director of strategy.

In New York, Susan Perlbachs was promoted to EVP, executive director, after the departure of Tammy Fischer. The account services team bolstered its leadership with the addition of Kevin King, EVP, general manager, who leads client management, along with continued creative leadership from Nic Capanear, EVP/ECD.

GSW revamped the Newtown, PA, office, originally a Blue Diesel satellite. It's now co-led by former Blue Diesel VP Kate Lontchar, promoted to SVP, managing director, and by former inVentiv Health Communications (iHC) managing partner Gene Black, who's now SVP/CD. Of Newtown, Daley concludes, "We've brought together a new business to form what's now a cohesive single brand. A very successful and stable agency now exists there."



**GSW's expanded work with Eli Lilly last year included this ad for the company's Humulin R**

Overseeing GSW's offices in both New York and Newtown offices is Marci Piasecki, hired last year as president of inVentiv's GSW East. Her purview also extends to iHC Media 360 and inVentiv Creative Studios (iCS).

Management singles out the staffing steps taken at the NY office, describing them as bringing "outstanding client discipline" that has created a "tremendous amount of optimism and growth potential in that office."

Headcount is between 525 and 550—probably within 5%-10% of where the agency has been for the last couple of years.

As for the greatest challenge the agency faces, that would be the clients who "ask for the future and act in the current," says Rooke. "You're constantly having to meet today's challenges while you're an organization that's built for the future. That's always a tension in the business."

To Daley, it's finding partners. Collaboration, he says, will "define success over the next few years."

—Marc Iskowitz