



**AT THE HELM**

From left: Noel Castro, chief creative officer; Christine D'Appolonia and Cris Morton, co-managing directors

**PERFORMANCE**

The firm expects to see 10% growth in both revenue and headcount by the end of this year

**HIGHLIGHTS**

Launched six brands, including Eisai's Belviiq, Takeda/Lundbeck's Brintellix and Sanofi's Lyxumia

Expanded into oncology, depression and animal health markets

**CHALLENGES**

Replacing lost business from Pfizer

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

**"We're much more open now to new challenges"**

—Cris Morton

# Havas Life Metro

A setback from a major client opens a path to diversification



**H**avas Life Metro co-managing director Cris Morton notes that the company has "gone through an enormous amount of change over the past couple of years." In this case, the sentiment rings far truer than it does when similar words come tumbling out of the mouths of other agency higher-ups. To begin with, the company has only been known as Havas Life Metro since September 2012, when it (along with its Euro RSCG Life siblings) shed part of their names. Partly to fill a digital-talent void, it acquired the highly regarded Cell Division in 2011. But these changes are dwarfed by the one Havas Life Metro was forced to tackle during the past 18 months or so: diversifying and expanding its client roster while simultaneously staring down a potent threat to its very being.

That threat was Pfizer's mandate to consolidate its agency relationships into the hands of only a few ad/marketing networks, and Havas ultimately found itself on the outside looking in. While the loss touched just about every firm in the Havas family, it hit Havas Life Metro particularly hard. For years, it had existed—and thrived—as almost a single-client shop, with Pfizer representing as much as 80% of its business. When the Pfizer decision came down, the company found itself with a canyon-sized hole to fill.

"A few years ago, we had \$30 million worth of Pfizer business," says co-managing director Christine D'Appolonia. "Last year we found ourselves replacing \$12 million in Pfizer business in 12 months."

It's to the great credit of D'Appolonia and Morton that they were able to successfully steer the agency through the type of client loss that often results in a staff exodus. "I don't look at [Pfizer's decision] as necessarily a terrible thing," Morton says. "They were a good client and we still have good relationships with them. But it really rallied this team. It forced us to show what we're able to do when we're all working together." D'Appolonia agrees: "Making sure people stayed motivated, that was hard... But we came out of it stronger."

Some observers might interpret such comments as little more than revisionist spin, but Havas Life Metro is clearly a better balanced agency (read: no longer bound to a single client's whims) than it was in years past. Headcount is down—D'Appolonia puts the number at "around 150," versus the 180 staffers the company reported at this time last year—but she expects that the firm will end 2014 with 10% growth in both revenue and employees.

Morton, for his part, says that he believes the diversification of Havas Life Metro's client base has had a major impact on all of the work and relationships that have followed. "I don't think we're afraid of anything anymore," he explains. "Having a client that's 80% of your business for as long as it was, you get used to doing everything the same way. We're much more open now to new challenges." Amid the



**Digital work for Amgen's Neulasta (left) and a print piece promoting Genentech (above)**

tumult, Havas Life Metro launched six brands, among them Eisai's weight-loss drug Belviiq, the Takeda/Lundbeck depression drug Brintellix and Sanofi's diabetes drug Lyxumia.

That attitude was similarly evident in Havas Life Metro's approach to new business. Whereas the agency used to stay within its therapeutic comfort zone, recent months have seen it make greater inroads into such new areas as oncology, depression and animal health. Up next on the firm's to-get list: health and wellness, medical devices and, according to Morton, "some pro bono work where we can flex our creative muscles."

—Larry Dobrow