



AT THE HELM

From left: Executive team members Jennifer Campanaro, Janelle Starr, Nadine Leonard, Bill Drummy, Lee Slovitt, James Talerico

PERFORMANCE

Revenue was up in 2013

HIGHLIGHTS

New client AOR wins from Roche Molecular, Duchesnay, TELA Bio, XenoPort and Agilent Technologies

Expanded relationships with Abbott Diabetes and Galderma

CHALLENGES

Consolidation led to the loss of some business from Sanofi

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

Heartbeat Ideas & Heartbeat West

Getting under the PHCG umbrella, but keeping its staff and culture

Hearbeat Ideas and Heartbeat West, which had explosive 58% revenue growth in 2012 (to \$25.3 million) underwent another transformation in late October 2013, when it was acquired by Publicis Healthcare Communications Group (PHCG).

“We were losing out on business because of agency network consolidation, and we were concerned that consolidation would continue to pick up pace,” says founder and CEO Bill Drummy. “If too many clients consolidated us out, it could put us in a dangerous position. A number of large holding companies were coming after us, and after a thorough evaluation process, it became very clear that PHCG would be the best partner.” A key provision of the deal was that Heartbeat’s senior bench would remain intact after the acquisition, and it has.

“We wanted a partner that would give us access to global leading clients—that was an absolute requirement,” Drummy says of the acquisition. “We wanted [to be part of] a great global network of agencies because clients kept asking us to do global work. And, we wanted a partner that would allow us to remain true to our culture and to our entrepreneurial nature. We found all three in Publicis.”

Just before the PHCG deal closed, Drummy visited all major clients. “I couldn’t tell them who was acquiring us, but I told them it was happening, why it would be good for them and that what they loved about Heartbeat wouldn’t change,” he says.

Though Drummy can’t report specifics, he confirms revenue was up in 2013.

It was certainly a good year for new client AOR wins. They included Roche Molecular (HPV franchise), Duchesnay (Diclegis), TELA Bio (TELAMax), XenoPort (Horizant) and Agilent Technologies (Genomics division).

Relationships also expanded with existing clients Abbott Diabetes, Sanofi and Galderma. The Sanofi business was subsequently lost due to consolidation with another agency network, and an AOR assignment on an MS-related treatment from XenoPort was lost after development stopped.

Drummy says the agency is considered a “leading AOR player”—doing outstanding innovative work that gets to market. He uses the term “pragmatic innovation” to refer to Heartbeat’s use of the most advanced technology in a practical way that drives business impact.

“We’re about ideas that will actually change markets—now and not five years from now,” he says. “We’re doing breakthrough work in mobile gamification and media that’s allowing us to claim the position of a true innovator in a highly regulated industry.”

Drummy continues to speak about innovation at industry events and conferences. This year he’s attending more cutting-edge events like SXSW and TED-MED and delivering the insights gathered to clients. He also joined Google’s Healthcare Advisory Board, and is a Blueprint Health mentor.



Digital work from Heartbeat promoting Horizant, XenoPort’s therapy for Restless Legs Syndrome

Janelle Starr, SVP, general manager of Heartbeat West in Santa Monica, calls 2013 “momentous.” Drummy agrees.

“After 15 years of being independent, and another 15 years before that working for another independent company, to become part of the world’s largest healthcare agency network was momentous,” he says. “There’s no way to prepare for it really—it’s a totally new experience, and it’s going well. It’s different from what we were used to. We were used to moving very fast, and, naturally, as part of a larger organization you have to adapt to certain protocols and systems. But our interaction with clients and staff and our culture hasn’t changed.” — Tanya Lewis

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—Bill Drummy