

ICC Lowe

New talent and expanding scope have made it “a different agency”



“We’re not just assigning another account or creative person but adding new disciplines”

—Matt Brown

It seems like six has been a lucky number for the ICC Lowe worldwide network’s flagship US agency. As it seeks to deliver a revamped agency model blending customer insight and engagement with medical acumen, six directors were added this year.

These subject matter experts—Tom Carr, VP of measurement and analytics; Anna Humphreys, director of media strategy; Sammy Noorani, director of search strategy; Larry Horvitz, director of UX strategy; and two directors of engagement strategy, Joanne Black and Paul Kaiser, who report to engagement chief Bill Meisle—underpin the new structure. Now, ICC Lowe will focus on building scale beneath them.

Then there are the half-dozen account wins the agency has chalked up. Among them were Merck Companion Animal Health—professional/consumer/digital work for the whole US franchise, including in-line products and Bravecto, a chewable for treating flea and tick infestation, which recently had a soft-launch.

The lone loss was Shire’s Vyvanse ADHD blockbuster, on the roster for eight years, due to consolidation.

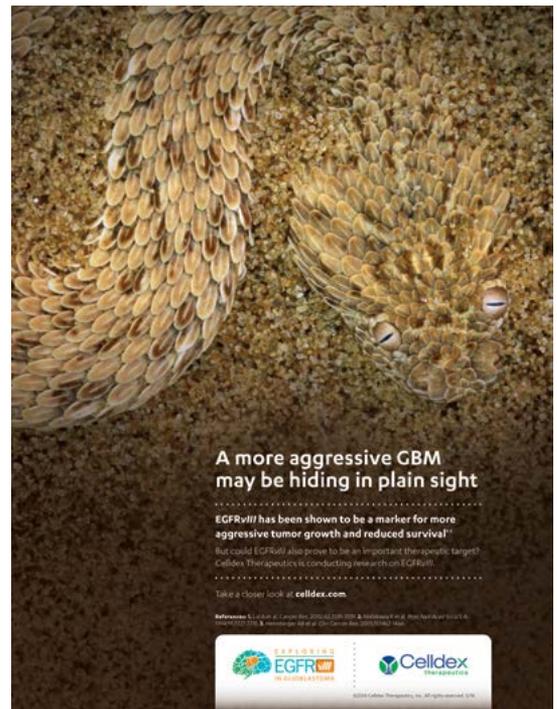
Despite all of the personnel changes, headcount remained unchanged vs. 2012 at 300 total, due to what management terms “attrition.” Execs also report double-digit revenue growth, some of it as a result of the changed model. Having staffed up, executives say they’ve finally been able to launch their new offering.

“I feel like we’re a different agency,” beams CEO Steve Viviano. “I feel we’re quickly going in a new direction.” General Manager Matt Brown—who joined in 2012 after running the 100% digital shop Ignite Health (now part of inVentiv Health-owned Palio+Ignite)—has this view of the changes: “There are pieces I’d like to move faster. Given the successes and client wins, I don’t wish a reversal of all that.”

It’s hard to turn a colossus around overnight. But it seems like ICC Lowe has started to add a robust digital layer to what Brown calls “the good bones that this organization was built on to begin with.” That is, creative, strategy and clinical acumen, thanks to 22 medical directors—internists and a host of subspecialists.

Brown, Viviano and chief creative director Chet Moss are betting that the internal changes will be a differentiator. “Whenever you step into a meeting now to discuss anything, there’s a deeper and richer breadth of talent and perspectives,” says Moss. “From a creative perspective, when these people are in a room and talking about ‘user personas’ now, it completely changes how I’m looking at customers.”

Besides reeling in the US business for Merck Companion Animal (think cats and dogs), ICC Lowe London added the drugmaker’s equine portfolio. Other US pick-ups: Teva’s ParaGard birth control device, a med-ed win; NewLink Genetics, an oncology opportunity; the pro-bono professional business for Partner-



Work for Botox’s overactive-bladder indication (left); an ad for Celldex Therapeutics (above)

ship for Drug-Free Kids (formerly Partnership for a Drug-Free America); and other HCP assignments from Celldex Therapeutics and Nuron Biotech's Meningococcal meningococcal serogroup C conjugate vaccine.

The new model is still developing, and the additional revenue is being invested in the transformation. Referring to the six recently hired SMEs, "The important part about that is they're new roles to ICC Lowe," explains Brown. "We're not just assigning another account or creative person but adding new disciplines."

Key to getting over the talent hump was hiring senior recruiter Joelle Ferraro from HealthStar Communications, a 20-year veteran who management credits with bringing on those six. She's not only uncovered imaginative ways to find qualified candidates but helped guide Viviano and others on matters of personnel. "It's really necessary," says the CEO of having someone of Ferraro's caliber in-house. "We're not just filling [seats]. We're changing who we are."



A piece for Boehringer Ingelheim's Metacam, which relieves cows' pain from de-horning

Perhaps the biggest test of the new model is whether it can head off the tendency among clients to award less than 100% of an account to their AOR, dishing off work like website construction or managing social media to the pure-play interactive boutiques.

This threat to full-service healthcare shops has become more pronounced with digital work accounting for more client spend. Naturally, Viviano wants it all. "We're one of the early AORs that can do the digital piece—the customer insights, the UX, the analytics—all things clients would go to smaller boutique kinds of project groups for," he says. "The way we're building, we want them to stay with their AOR." As proof, he notes that his crew is handling consumer digital on the Merck veterinary accounts—a switch for an agency that forged its rep largely as a tier-1 professional AOR.

No, it's not TV, but the agency is working on a website and digital media placement for the Bravecto chewable, and Brown says DTC is in the cards for the brand's formal launch next year. "I don't quite internalize that," says Viviano, "but when you add services you get the consumer work with it, and that's massive good news for me and a big ah-ha."

The CEO also cites his agency's impressive showing at the 2013 MM&M Awards, at which ICC Lowe col-



AT THE HELM
Steve Viviano, CEO

PERFORMANCE
Executives report double-digit revenue growth for 2013

Delivered on a revamped agency model

HIGHLIGHTS
A half-dozen account wins included work for Merck Companion Animal Health and flea-and tick medication Bravecto

Other US pick-ups came from Teva's ParaGard, NewLink Genetics, Celldex Therapeutics and Nuron Biotech

Executed pro-bono professional business for Partnership for Drug-Free Kids

Won four Gold Awards at the 2013 MM&M Awards

Handled consumer digital on Merck veterinary accounts

Got over the "talent hump," bringing significant new talent into the agency

CHALLENGES
Lost Shire's ADHD blockbuster Vyvanse due to consolidation

Shuttered its New York office in early 2013

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

lected four trophies—all of them gold: for its Buscopan "Take Control" print ad for Boehringer Ingelheim, print campaign Activyl "Switch The Itch," professional sales aid for Shire's "Adult Maintenance" campaign, and a short film in the agency self-promotion category.

Another structural change is that ICC Lowe Thermal is no longer being run as a digital agency but has new branding—as ICC Lowe Thermal Labs—and a directive to create new products and services. The challenge is to ensure that the lab fuels proprietary offerings that are constantly shared with clients. The new initiative, being run by the same person who heads up the agency's developers and programmers, David Tlatelpa, is working on its first app in the med-ed arena.

Asked about device shop ICC Lowe Redshift, Brown says it's "still very important to us," but that "there's more we can do to not just satisfy the [med-tech] market but to excite the market."

In terms of future plans for the flagship agency,



Another ad produced for BI was this one for Ubrolexin, an antibiotic used to protect cattle

Brown foresees the agency continuing in its digital ways but also wading deeper into consumer work, multimedia and search.

A patent-cliff analysis shows ICC Lowe is in decent shape: Work is finishing on GSK fish-oil pill Lovaza and Sunovion sleep drug Lunesta, both slated to lose exclusivity this year. Beyond those, according to Viviano, most of the portfolio is in the pre-launch or launch phase.

While ICC Lowe shuttered its NY office in early 2013, it wants to keep on growing internationally. Lee Hurley, who runs ICC Lowe Zurich, has been tapped to spearhead the continuing mission to build out healthcare within Lowe by changing the branding of already wholly owned agencies to ICC Lowe.

"IPG still wants it to happen, as does Lowe," says Viviano. Although Mumbai agreed to rebrand last year, "The challenge for me is cracking Asia Pacific."

Staff development also continues apace with what the agency calls "The You," an extension of ICC Lowe University where multiple staffers become teachers, both seniors and also juniors who have expertise to share. Says Moss, "it's remarkable to see how they blossom in front of a room because they know their stuff." — Marc Iskowitz