



AT THE HELM

Renee Wills, president

PERFORMANCE

Sales hike of 10% puts agency in the \$10-million-to-\$15-million revenue range

HIGHLIGHTS

Six-month hiatus was used to solidify relationships with existing clients and develop the agency's office

Wills expanded her social-media presence with Twitter feed @Renee_Wills

Grew headcount, and brought on three new clients so far this year

CHALLENGES

Finding staff with skills in "today's technology"

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

ICC Lowe Trio

Despite a six month breather from pitches, ICC firm's sales rose



ICC Lowe Trio came into 2013 having doubled its client roster and moved into larger quarters in Parsippany, NJ—closer to, but still separate from, parent ICC Lowe. Halfway through 2014, the agency is again poised to expand into bigger space.

Last year's 10% sales hike, to the \$10-million to \$15-million revenue range, was the agency's sixth straight year of double-digit growth and came after Renee Wills, president, paused the agency's new-business pitching for six months. That decision worked out well—as did a second-half return to the hunt.

"If I look back at 2013, what did we do?" asks Wills. "It was about on-boarding but also about making sure existing clients are happy with our work... There's no better way to grow your business."

Among three wins the agency scored in early 2014, one came from existing client Johnson & Johnson, which awarded ICC Lowe Trio a professional project, without a pitch, for its well-known BandAid first-aid consumer brand.

New clients also gave the agency a warm welcome. Ophthalmic equipment manufacturer TopCon agreed to work with the agency on a project basis.

The other two assignments netted this year were project work for Merck Consumer Care [whose portfolio was sold to Bayer HealthCare earlier this year for \$14.2 billion—Ed.], and the global launch for Boehringer Ingelheim's biosimilars franchise, an

assignment which spans naming, branding and identity work for four products.

It builds on ongoing professional business and promotional med ed for key accounts ranging from Rx drugs like AstraZeneca blood thinner Brilinta and BI's tiotropium plus olodaterol for COPD, to OTCs Listerine and Reach, to devices like Acuvue contacts.

The agency also used last year's hiatus to build its nest. It made the new office a canvas for its creative, both final and early-stage versions of its work.

This has been a boon, says Wills, "whether for internal teams, or for bringing on prospective clients. We can show them how an idea came to life."

As part of "Trio U," teams met in small, multidisciplinary groups to talk about the latest in tech, and to explore how it can benefit clients. Wills touts a "virtual vending machine" idea for HCPs that sprung from one such session.

Wills also cemented her social-media presence. She tweets steadily about leadership (her feed, @Renee_Wills, recently contained aphorisms from Mark Twain, Henry Ford and a Navy Seal), and plans call for the agency to venture further into social media with the launch of a career-related LinkedIn page, "Trio Tree House."

"Our brand of authenticity is all about connecting better... with each other and our clients," says Wills, explaining how these efforts ladder up to her agency's and the parent company's credo.



From left: ICC Lowe Trio's digital work for Johnson's Baby Products and an ad for Listerine Naturals

"The idea behind [the page] is to help you be successful in your career," as well as to build Trio's reputation "without being an agency that says, 'Hey, look at our best, latest award.'"

Wills says the biggest challenge for Trio has been finding the talent with the skills to "guide clients in today's world using today's technology."

Still, they grew headcount by 10% to 15%, to 75 total (including shared services), roughly in line with the revenue increase, after bolstering areas like project management and adding a full-time UX designer.

ICC Lowe Trio wants to continue building. Wills says she's "staring down" the space next door—another 7,000 sq. ft. of offices that could accommodate 30 staffers. ICC Lowe CEO Steve Viviano quips that "she is dying to knock the wall down."

More pitches must come through first, though. Says Wills, "We're in a good place to say, 'OK where do we grow next?'" — Marc Iskowitz

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