AT THE HELM
From left: Brady Walcott, CMO; Peter Korian, CEO; Marc Porter, managing director

PERFORMANCE
Revenue grew by 10% in 2013

HIGHLIGHTS
New clients included Novartis, Medivation and Astellas

Expanded relationships with Genentech and Baxter

Headcount grew from 155 to 175

CHALLENGES
Dealing with the lack of communication between the components of client teams

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

"We didn't want to grow at a fast clip and lose who we are"
—Peter Korian

IOMEDIA

Achieving success by creating unique experiences, not just ads

If you find yourself in the middle of a conversation with the IOMEDIA brain trust, it's easy to forget that you're talking with healthcare marketers. That's not a slap at people in healthcare marketing, nor a suggestion that IOMEDIA is less invested in its healthcare work than in its other projects—the "virtual venues" it has built for tens of sports teams, for example. It's just that IOMEDIA appears to be as much in the experience business as it is in healthcare or technology or any other vertical.

"I think the elevator pitch is that our agency is different—as if you haven't heard that before," quips IOMEDIA president and founder Peter Korian.

IOMEDIA's heavy-on-the-nuance, light-on-the-BS corporate personality might have something to do with its roots. Korian himself is, in his words, "a half-breed between technology and design," and he has staffed the agency with individuals from the startup world, pure-play tech firms and CPG companies. In short, he's stacked the agency with people who haven't been lulled into doing things the way they've always been done.

"I'm probably going to regret saying this, but as the founder of a business, if I lose my energy level with the people I work with, I tend to move on to the next thing. We run [IOMEDIA] more like a university or a startup," Korian explains. Adds IOMEDIA managing director Marc Porter, "What we like are people who want to see if there's a better mousetrap that can be built—and when they build it, how they can build it better."

At this moment in the evolution of pharma and healthcare marketing, that's a compelling proposition for many employees, especially those obsessed over technology and creativity. IOMEDIA jumped its headcount from 155 to 175 over the past year and grew revenue 10% in 2013—which, to hear Korian tell it, represented more of a side-shuffle than a step forward.

"We maintained the base and grew a little," he says. "We didn't want to grow at a fast clip and lose who we are, so we scaled back a bit." Of course, "scaling back" in IOMEDIA's orbit meant expanded relationships with Genentech and Baxter as well as the additions of Novartis, Medivation and Astellas to the client roll. The agency also diversified its client base—not from a therapeutic-area perspective, but from a geographic one. "For an east-coast company, it was shocking how much west-coast work we had," Korian notes.

Those client relationships have evolved considerably over the last half-decade or so. In its infancy, IOMEDIA mostly worked with clients on a project basis. Now, AOR, digital AOR and tech AOR designations outnumber its managed services, data management and project relationships. "We've broken down that wall with many of our clients," Korian says.

Yet when asked about IOMEDIA's path going forward, Korian doesn't talk about growing revenues by a certain percentage or pushing into new therapeutic areas. Rather, he talks about transformation and how he hopes IOMEDIA will help ready-and-willing clients achieve it.

From left: digital work for Baxter Pharmaceuticals' BioPharm Solutions, a piece for the CellCept Transplant Commitment Program

"One of my pet peeves right now is that companies today have internal [marketing] teams, measurement goals, vendors like SAP or Oracle, consultants like Deloitte or Price Waterhouse—but there's so little understanding of how it all works together," Korian explains. "I want to build a platform encompassing all of that and give marketers a way to drive results through that platform. It doesn't necessarily mean eliminating everything. I just want to help [clients] get above it all." —*Larry Dobrow*