



MicroMass Communications

Understanding patient behavior helps this agency bring in clients

AT THE HELM

Phil Stein, CEO; Alyson Connor, president

PERFORMANCE

Revenue up 15% in 2013, to between \$10 million and \$15 million

HIGHLIGHTS

Assignments from new clients on three brands: Gilead's Sovaldi, Novo Nordisk's liraglutide and Sanofi's alirocumab

Other new clients included ViiV and BioCryst

Released and promoted studies on several topics

CHALLENGES

Lost work from several accounts

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



MicroMass, with its deep roots in behavioral science and patient engagement, has made the most of clients' increasing need to engage with patients. The Cary, NC-headquartered agency's revenue climbed 15% last year (somewhere in the \$10 million to \$15 million range), driven by outstanding new business wins as well as organic growth.

Highlights included assignments from new clients on three huge brands — AOR for relationship marketing on Gilead's Sovaldi (hepatitis C), consumer AOR for Novo Nordisk's liraglutide (obesity), and prelaunch medical communications work on Sanofi's alirocumab (hypercholesterolemia). "It was our biggest year ever in terms of wins and we added a lot of new, young exciting brands," says CEO Phil Stein.

"We were poised for success because our new business funnel was primed," adds president Alyson Connor. "We've been doing behaviorally based marketing for 20 years, and our story is resonating even more now as all clients are looking for differentiators. Behavior change and patient engagement have applications in all categories of healthcare, and the combination of our scientific background of changing behavior with our creative was the winning factor."

All told, the agency landed 10 new assignments—five

from new clients and five from existing clients — across a range of therapeutic categories.

Relationships with Onyx Pharmaceuticals, GSK, Merck and UTC all expanded with project work assigned on new brands. They included Nexavar (oncology), Benlysta (lupus), Zostavax (herpes zoster vaccine), Orenitram (pulmonary arterial hypertension) and Surtasis (Oncology). In addition to the wins from Gilead, Novo Nordisk and Sanofi, the agency also began project work with ViiV Healthcare on HIV product dolutegravir.

Pieces of business with Merz Pharmaceuticals, Metagenics, Shionogi, Takeda and UTC were lost—due to completion of project work, changes in direction and Takeda's licensing of BP drug Edarbi to another firm.

Connor says a big challenge the agency faces is getting clients to stop looking through a product-focused lens and start looking through a patient-focused lens.

"The traditional playbook is to take professional marketing and dumb it down for the consumer," she explains. "Giving patients brand claims isn't going to engage them. To truly engage patients you have to start with what they need and want, and typically that's not brand claims."

Clients often aren't keen on letting MicroMass publish or promote results of its work, so the agency developed its own app, "Time 2 Focus," for type 2 diabetic patients. About 200 patients participated in a trial of the app this past May, and it's expected to launch widely



MicroMass's ads promoting Remodulin (left) and Living PAH (above), both for United Therapeutics

this fall. "The app demonstrates our results, and it will really help diabetic patients learn to problem solve," Connor says. "Because we built the platform, we can easily and quickly adapt it to other disease states, and we plan on building more apps like this in the future."

The agency also conducts a lot of original research, and last year it released and promoted studies covering influences on prescribing behavior, healthcare reform and evaluation of patient support programs.

Plans this year include expanding programs and services for health systems and accountable care organizations to help them scale impact and accelerate outcomes in high-risk patient populations.

Revenue is expected to increase between 20% and 25% overall for 2014. — Tanya Lewis

"To engage patients, you have to start with what they need and want"

—Alyson Connor