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AGENCIES



AT THE HELM

Kirsten Kantak,
President

PERFORMANCE

On a par with the prior
year's growth

HIGHLIGHTS

Hiring Kirsten Kantak
as president

Jad Daccurso, SVP,
group account super-
visor, returns from
Europe to the New York
office

CHALLENGES

Launching more
expeditiously than
heretofore

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

“WE WANT TO MAKE SURE [CLIENTS] UNDERSTAND THE VALUE OF THE PRODUCTS AND HOW THEY FIT INTO THE CONTEXT OF THE TREATMENT OF PARTICULAR DISEASES SO THEY CAN MAKE THE BEST CHOICES.”

—KIRSTEN KANTAK

BIOLUMINA GROUP

High science sets the tone for this firm's values and culture



When Kirsten Kantak returns to New York City later this month to take the reins as president of Biolumina Group, it will feel like a homecoming for the 12-year Harrison and Star veteran.

After playing pivotal roles in growing H&S's oncology franchise and starting conflict shop Biolumina, Kantak has spent the past three years establishing European operations out of London and Paris.

Biolumina has carved a stellar reputation in the high-science specialty categories and Kantak truly “bleeds” its values, culture and the work it does. “It's the science that gets us excited,” she says. “It's being able to take these highly complex scientific ideas and translate them into compelling, memorable, creative things that impact customers and change their behaviors.”

Kantak has set a high bar for the agency and for herself, with a focus on attracting and cultivating talent and clients. “I'm looking forward to continuing to build the organization,” she says.

Ty Curran, chairman and CEO of Medical Specialist Communications Group, which owns Biolumina and H&S, has little doubt that Kantak will succeed. “Kirsten has proved herself to be a natural leader,” he says. “Her charisma has helped to build strong teams and solid client partnerships for H&S, and now she'll do the same for Biolumina.”

Jad Daccurso, SVP, group account supervisor, will also return from Europe to the New York office. Meanwhile, previous Biolumina president Ane Jones is heading in the opposite direction to lead the European business.

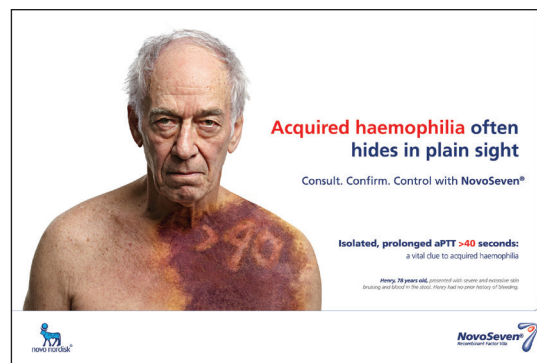
Kantak reports that Biolumina enjoyed a good 2014 (without disclosing numbers) and that 2015 is so far consistent with that. Head count is in the region of 70 to 80. Clients include Novo Nordisk, Novartis, Genentech, Eisai, Salix and Apobiologix, and most of the recent growth has been organic.

“We've worked with a number of existing clients on launching either new products or new indications,” says Kantak. “We've also been able to expand our foothold with some clients, doing more work from a professional standpoint, and also different kinds of work — particularly market prep, because a lot of the brands we work on tend to be first in class.”

But the current trend of faster approval times, particularly for breakthrough products, brings its own challenges. “We have to find ways to get ready for a launch in a much more expedited time frame but, at the same time, maintaining the high quality of work,” says Kantak.

Other challenges of the modern landscape include the need to demonstrate value of medications across audiences. “We have to think about the impact, not just on efficacy numbers, but also on the patient experience,” says Kantak. “And we try to find ways to ensure that the value we're communicating to payers is consistent with the value we're communicating to physicians and patients.”

Kantak hopes to introduce innovative approach-



Powerful Biolumina work for Eisai (Paws for Compassion, above left) and Novo Nordisk (acquired hemophilia, above)

es but understands that evolution isn't always straightforward. “You have to be willing to take risks, but you also have to recognize when something's not working and learn from that quickly.”

The sheer pace of change and the proliferation of information in specialty areas can be daunting, and Kantak believes Biolumina can play a key role in helping clients keep up. “We want to make sure they understand the value of the products and how they fit into the context of the treatment of particular diseases so they can make the best choices.”

—James Chase