

100
AGENCIES



AT THE HELM

Left to right: Tom Galati, associate partner and creative director; Dina Peck, managing partner and executive creative director; Deb Deaver, president; Eliot Tyler, managing partner and director of client services; Yvonne Lavender, associate partner and director of interactive marketing

PERFORMANCE

Revenues up by 10% over the previous year's

HIGHLIGHTS

Head count grew from 130 to 150+

Grew its relationships with Biogen and Vertex

CHALLENGES

Considering health options from the patient's POV

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

“PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES DON'T CREATE PRODUCTS SO DOCTORS CAN USE THEM.”

—DEB DEAVER

CDMI CONNECT

Putting the patient front and center



"Brave" generally isn't an adjective used to describe healthcare marketers, in no small part owing to the industry's historical aversion to risk. That said, CDMi Group-owned digital shop CDMiConnect may be the rare company worthy of that description. In fact, agency president Deb Deaver says the firm prides itself on trying new and different solutions on behalf of its clients.

CDMiConnect enjoyed healthy growth during 2014, growing revenues by 10% and increasing head count from 130 to 152. Deaver declined to identify more recent additions to the client roster, but the company grew its relationships with Biogen (on its MS franchise) and Vertex (for cystic fibrosis).

In Deaver's mind, one of the primary things that distinguishes CDMiConnect from the competition is its willingness and ability to sell hesitant clients on the potential of digital outreach. "There are plenty of companies who say social equals Twitter posts, but we're about creating content that trends," she explains. That's one of the reasons why the agency has invested so heavily in video during the past 18 months. "People want to watch [it] over and over again ... People want to share it, not just ingest it," Deaver notes.

Although healthcare marketers have been talking a lot of late about patients and the notion

of patient-centricity, CDMiConnect has been attempting to gear its thinking toward the patient's perspective for years. "Pharmaceutical companies don't create products so that doctors can use them," Deaver notes. That patients are increasingly involved in their medical decisions—they no longer sit back and listen passively as physicians discuss their options, as they did in years past—means that marketers must approach every project with the patient mind-set front and center.

CDMiConnect managing partner Dina Peck says adopting a patient perspective can sometimes be as simple as explaining a situation employing the same terminology and phrasing that a patient might. Her example? Why would a pharma marketer use the word *pruritus* when it could just as easily say "itchy"?

It's just this sort of right-in-front-of-you-but-hard-to-see insight that the agency tries to infuse in all its work. Succeeding in this goal, of course, is easier said than done.

To help get CDMiConnect staffers in the right frame of mind, the agency has attempted to make time for stimulating pursuits—like office field trips to places such as recording studios. The company is also aggressive about pushing its employees to think creatively and strategically, in part through regularly scheduled "innovation days" during which the use of mobile devices is banned. For an upcoming innovation day, agency staffers will be divided into teams and challenged to devise specific workable ideas for future innovation.

This sort of openness is important at CDMiConnect, Deaver and Peck say. Too, the agency is as focused on cultivating its talent as it is on creating



Campaigns that illustrate CDMiConnect's patient-centricity include "Faces of Celiac" (above left) and "Gout Is Serious"

impactful work. And it's not shy about celebrating its successes, either. The firm posted images from its quarterly awards breakfast—an event that features food, internal recognition and a Q-and-A session in which "prickly" queries are encouraged, Deaver says—for all to see. Deaver and Peck say that both current and prospective employees have responded favorably to CDMiConnect's give-and-take environment.

—Deborah Weinstein