

**100  
AGENCIES**



**AT THE HELM**

Dave Ormesher, CEO, and Jon Sawyer, president and COO

**PERFORMANCE**

Up 10% from a year ago to under \$25 million

**HIGHLIGHTS**

New clients include Novo Nordisk US, Allergan and Astellas

Key hires are David Droll as strategy director and Jeff Buchheit as director of analytics

**CHALLENGES**

Staying ahead of systematic healthcare changes

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

**“IT’S NOT JUST ABOUT USING SOFTWARE AND E-MAIL CAMPAIGNS BUT ABOUT USING DATA TO MAKE BETTER DECISIONS ABOUT WHERE TO PUT THE MONEY.”**

—JON SAWYER

# CLOSERLOOK

Digital know-how meets relationship marketing



**Closerlook CEO Dave Ormesher was lucky to get in** on digital’s ground floor. “About 15 years ago we bought an IT firm and brought in 11 engineers and shoved them next to our designers and copywriters and account people,” he says. “Back then nobody was doing that—bringing it all under one roof.” According to Ormesher, a lot of agencies should consider doing the same. “I’m shocked at how much technology outsourcing the big agencies do.”

Ormesher’s agency, founded in 1987, now numbers 125 people, and it’s still all about integration. “We’re pretty much 100-percent digital,” he says, “but with some print here and there.”

The company focuses on multichannel relationship marketing; wrangling data has long been at its core. Says President and COO Jon Sawyer, “We’re excited about all the attention data is finally getting, since we’re well positioned to act on that.” Closerlook uses a proprietary platform called Backstage to collect and organize data from a range of sources. As Ormesher explains it, “Let’s say we know that a particular doctor goes to a conference, sees a sales rep, visits the brand’s website and so on. We can pull all that information together into one customer database. The clients get a view they’ve never seen before, which allows them to make smarter marketing decisions.”

Closerlook continues to stay ahead of the pack. The agency’s 2014 revenues of under \$25 million showed a 10% jump over those of 2013. In the past year they’ve invested in technology, software,

personnel and visibility and also moved further into analytics, trying to deepen customer intelligence and broaden customer access. Among closerlook’s new accounts is a significant partnership with Novo Nordisk US. Other newcomers include Allergan, best known for Botox; and the Japan-based Astellas, which covers a variety of therapeutic areas.

A new hire is David Droll, who is now closerlook’s strategy director. And Jeff Buchheit has just come onboard as the new director of analytics.

In looking back, Sawyer considers 2014 to be the year when their clients really warmed to the idea of relationship marketing. “It’s been hard to make advances,” he says, “but we finally saw them embrace the concept. It’s not just about using software and e-mail campaigns but about using data to make better decisions about where to put the money.” While closerlook sees marketing as a science, “that doesn’t mean taking away from the creative; we still have to communicate.” What it does mean is that their campaigns are more targeted and more effective.

As for upcoming plans, Ormesher says closerlook is beginning to package the processes they’ve developed to help their clients transition further into the digital world. “As a 125-member company, it’s easy for us to pivot,” he says. “It’s way harder for a 10-billion-dollar product company. We’re committed to helping.”

And these days, pivoting is a skill everyone needs. “We’re all facing the same systemic changes in healthcare,” Ormesher says. “Patients becoming more players; payers getting stronger; hospitals telling pharma ‘Your product better work.’ We’re trying to stay ahead of it, knowing that pharma has to be more careful about spending money on R&D,



Demonstrating the firm’s digital know-how, an online sales aid (above left) and an array of cross-platform executions

and also on marketing.”

Meanwhile, the closerlook staff has been settling into its expanded digs in Chicago’s River North district, where they set up shop a decade ago in a former candy factory and recently took over two more floors. The open-plan office has its benefits, with everyone working side by side, and some surprises: one hot summer day, what Ormesher calls “a goopy mess” began dripping down onto a desk. It turned out to be toffee that had been up in the rafters since before the renovation. As workplace mishaps go, that’s pretty sweet.

—Barbara Peck