

FCB HEALTH

A behemoth gets even bigger



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—DANA MAIMAN

FCB Health anticipated that it would grow in 2014 and 2015. It anticipated new work from a host of existing clients and a possible expansion of its already-extensive global footprint. It did not, however, anticipate what formally went down on March 3 of this year.

It was on that day that Interpublic Group, parent of both the FCB Health and McCann Health networks, eliminated its third health-minded sibling network, ICC Lowe, by folding its three brands into FCB. In the wake of the re-org, FCB found itself with three New Jersey-based health/pharma marketing companies under its aegis: flagship ICC Lowe (now just ICC), ICC Lowe Pace (Pace) and ICC Lowe Trio (Trio). Its expected growth spurt had become, like, a growth geyser.

Asked to quantify the degree of change, EVP and chief creative officer Rich Levy pauses for a second, then deadpans, “You’re asking a creative guy to do math?” After he and president and CEO Dana Maiman bat around numbers for a minute, Levy comes up with a post-ICC sum of 1,400 people: 800 at FCB, 200 at Area 23, 140 at Neon, 140 at ICC Lowe, 60 at Trio and 60 at Pace. “We don’t stop to count,” he adds. “We can’t stop to count.”

So while many of FCB Health’s \$100-million-club

peers cannily cite “managing growth” as their biggest challenge, FCB has been forced to deal with the issue on a far broader scale. Even before the ICC additions, FCB had enjoyed a big, big year. While the company doesn’t share revenue specifics, Maiman references, ahem, a competing publication’s revenue categories to characterize FCB’s growth.

“What we won in new business alone in a 12-month period would be a Category 1 agency [income of more than \$50 million] in its own right,” she quips. “We added more people than most agencies have total.”

Maiman shares this information without brassiness or bluster. Rather, there’s something akin to amazement in her voice—that FCB has managed to sustain a pace of growth that few others can come close to matching.

“Success begets success,” she says by way of explanation. “Where a lot of agencies go through a tumultuous ride—some years up, some years down—we’ve been fortunate in that each year we’ve managed to build on the one before.” Levy attributes this, in no small part, to the bonds that the company’s leaders have endeavored to forge: “Clients are doing our recruiting for us in some cases. When [people on brand teams] rotate to another brand or go somewhere else, they want us there with them.”

And so it is that FCB counts 18 of the top 20 pharma companies, among them Novartis, AbbVie, BMS, Gilead and Amgen, as clients. Existing clients Actavis (Namenda and Linzess), Teva (a migraine drug) and Genentech (for ophthalmic products) sent additional work FCB’s way, as did new ones like Astellas (Myrbetriq), Galderma (Restylane and Dysport) and Takeda (for gout).

FCB also took on a pair of new small companies, Chimerix and Keryx—the kind of clients that industry watchers often deem a poor fit for a jumbo-size firm. Needless to say, Maiman disputes this characterization. “With smaller companies, sometimes you hear, ‘Oh God, you guys are too big, we’ll get lost,’” she says. “Then they get to know us a little and see the vast resources they’ll have available to them and realize that they’ll have lean teams, and it’s like, ‘This is amazing!’”

When asked whether working with relative newbies like Chimerix or Keryx is as fun or challenging or rewarding as working alongside pharma giants, Maiman doesn’t take the bait. “Come on. Do you have more than one kid? Even if you have 20, you find something ridiculously awesome and adorable about each one,” she cracks, before turning serious again. “With start-up-type companies, you do have some additional freedom. But sometimes you get the same type of freedom if you’re working with a big company on a challenger brand, one that’s maybe not the leader in the category.”

The personnel depth acquired as part of the absorption of the ICC Lowe brands, particularly the medical/scientific expertise, gives FCB an embarrassment of riches when it comes to assembling



Eyecatching pharma advertising work from FCB Health includes the now-iconic “Line Drawings” for Linzess (opposite page), “I am” for Namenda XR (above) and “Fragile Heart” for Novartis (below)



account teams. In a corporate culture that’s long prided itself on its flexibility and fluidity, it’s almost unfair that the company should have this much from which to choose. And it’s almost unprecedented that a large-scale integration process of this sort would proceed without incident.

Maiman says the company’s financial infrastructure has more than a little to do with the smooth transition. “What’s the heart of all evil? Money,” she explains. “We have only one P&L, so everybody knows we’re fighting for a common cause.” In fact, Maiman reports that employee receptivity to the new and expanded FCB structure took her a bit by surprise.

“Whenever you have a restructure of this

magnitude, there’s probably some angst,” she says. “But it was pretty tough for people to miss the opportunity that came with it.”

She doesn’t need to add that the opportunity extends beyond professional development. Want to work at a large NYC agency? FCB has you covered. Want a mid-size firm in New Jersey, or a satellite office in a different time zone? Ditto. That may be the most understated benefit of FCB’s adoption of the three ICC Lowe companies: The additional locations and specialties will likely make the company even more appealing to would-be employees.

“We’re big on proactive career management for our people,” Levy says. “If you’re happy where you are, that’s great—nobody’s going to send you anywhere. But maybe some people want to check certain boxes off for their résumé, like high-science experience or global work. They can do that. We benefit from that as well, because it helps us develop our bench.”

Don’t think that this isn’t a major priority for FCB moving forward. In terms of finding new talent, Levy laments, “I’m looking in places I never did before. All the great ones have jobs.” FCB has beefed up its recruiting in nontraditional places (like design schools) and is moving more aggressively to partner with Pharm.D programs. Levy is getting per-

sonally involved in a novel way: In response to one of his major frustrations—“no matter how large healthcare advertising is as a profession, there are still people who don’t know what it is”—he’ll help shape a new healthcare-marketing-specific curriculum at the University of Georgia.

Beyond that, look for FCB to devote much of its focus to ensuring that former ICC Lowe people become a part of the company fabric. “Wherever we go, we can identify an FCB person when we see one. We all share the same DNA. It’s like when you see a sibling,” Maiman says. “That’s what we want for all our new people. We’re seeing it already.”

—Larry Dobrow



AT THE HELM

Left to right: Mike Guarino, chief strategic officer; Dana Maiman, president and CEO; Tom Kelly, chief financial officer; Lisa Dujat, chief talent officer; Rich Levy, EVP and chief creative officer

PERFORMANCE

Revenues over \$100 million

HIGHLIGHTS

Added to existing clients Novartis, AbbVie, BMS, Gilead and Amgen

Existing clients Actavis, Teva and Genentech sent additional work

New clients include Astellas, Galderma and Takeda plus Chimerix and Keryx

CHALLENGES

Managing restructuring, attracting talent

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