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AGENCIES



AT THE HELM

Erik Mednis, chief creative officer, and Larry Mickelberg, partner and chief digital officer

PERFORMANCE

Reported 65% growth

HIGHLIGHTS

Had five defining wins, including Amgen and Actavis

Executed four product launches

Deepened ties with longtime clients like Sanofi and Novartis

CHALLENGES

Staying adept at managing through bottlenecks

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

HAVAS LYNX

Evolving from a digitally focused shop into a full-service agency

At this time last year Larry Mickelberg, partner, chief digital officer, Havas Health, and president, Havas Lynx US, was confident he might be able to better 2013's 20% growth. He was right, and yet somehow wide of the mark. Forget 20%; Havas Lynx ended 2014 a gargantuan 65% ahead.

"We blew it out," he says. "This has absolutely been the best year ever. I don't think I have ever had a year professionally as good."

"We've evolved from a digital-focused shop, with really good bones, into a real full-service agency of record that runs really smart communications by driving innovation," explains Mickelberg. "That is what we have aspired to be and what our clients are now really excited to buy."

In other words, he believes the market is catching up to Havas Lynx's vision of the future of healthcare communications.

"It is a validation of a lot of the things we have been saying for a while," confirms Erik Mednis, chief creative officer. "Successful marketers and brands will be the ones who understand how they live in their patients' worlds. We have been looking

at where the white spaces are and how people interact with the health ecosystem, so we are able to talk to clients and potential clients—with authority—about identifying opportunities and doing something about them."

This "authoritative voice" comes in part from an investment in training and development. In the past year Havas Lynx has partnered with Stanford academic and behavior-change expert BJ Fogg and sent the entire strategy team to attend his health persuasive design boot camps. Armed with many of Fogg's approaches, the team returned to formulate new "service-based methodologies" for client work.

Mickelberg notes that a lot of this is "upstream" work. "It's not necessarily brand development per se," he says, "but really thinking about that patient experience and where the brand can meaningfully play."

The year 2014 was marked by five "big, defining wins," including Amgen and Actavis and involving four launch products. The agency also deepened roles with longtime clients like Sanofi and Novartis.

For one client Havas Lynx looked at the socioeconomic and physical manifestations of a particular disease across dimensions of home, work and play. It reached out to some unorthodox partners, like Verizon and Trip Advisor, to help solve service-oriented problems and identify white space to help the brand create a new service-experience platform. "For clients that can wistfully talk about innovation," says Mickelberg, "we have found ways to make it accessible to them."

In terms of the agency's challenges, Mednis has

seen an increased urgency from clients to get materials to market, no doubt mirroring the accelerated FDA approval rates seen in the past year. He also reports that the age-old roadblock of gaining medical approval can still create issues. "I can't say the bottleneck or timing has changed at all," says Mednis, "but we have probably

gotten a little more adept at managing through it."

Mickelberg believes the agency is getting closer to being able to demonstrate cost savings across patient populations for specific brands or treatment regimens. "We've been in discussions with some of the leading EHR platforms," he says, "and when we pitched the business for 2016, 2017 and 2018, those are precisely the kinds of ideas we brought to the table, and precisely the kinds of reasons we are winning."

—James Chase



Havas Lynx produced this ad for ulcerative colitis drug, Actavis's Delzicol

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—LARRY MICKELBERG