



AT THE HELM

Marcia McLaughlin, CEO, and Michael Metelenis, chief creative officer

PERFORMANCE

Revenue up 25-30%, expecting to top \$20 million this year

HIGHLIGHTS

Landed 11 wins in the last year, including AOR work for Eisai and Dey

Headcount up to 85, hired Brian Schwartz as SVP, director of operations

CHALLENGES

Finding high-science oncology-focused talent

Dealing with the economy and healthcare reform

For contact details, service offerings and client roster, see Agency A-to-Z, beginning on page 171

“Clients need us to address immediate and growing marketing challenges and ramp up over night”

—Marcia McLaughlin

Centron

Six-year-old shop grows in the double digits, hopes to break \$20 million mark

Centron CEO Marcia McLaughlin reports revenue increased last year by 25%-30%, rising from the \$10 million to \$15 million range in 2008 to the \$15 million to \$20 million range in 2009. She expects it to top \$20 million this year. Headcount grew to 75 ending 2009 and is up to about 85 now.

“Our growth even surprised us,” McLaughlin says. “I think we started the agency at the right time, and our offering was the right one for hard economic times. Clients would rather spend the small amount of money they have on senior-level people who can give them senior-level strategy as well as execute day-to-day.”

Centron has certainly experienced rapid and steady growth since McLaughlin and chief creative officer Michael Metelenis (former KPR co-presidents) founded it six years ago. Seven senior-level creative and account management staffers joined in 2009. Brian Schwartz came on board as SVP, director of operations. Schwartz formerly directed operations at KPR.

There are currently about 10 openings, with the greatest need being for talent with oncology expertise. McLaughlin feels she’s been “very lucky” in finding good talent. “Because we came from running a big agency we were very connected,” she says. “Recently it’s more difficult to find high-science oncology-focused talent, but it’s not impossible.”

Eleven wins came in last year, including new AOR assignments from Eisai and Dey. Eisai assignments include Gliadel (brain tumor) and Fragmin (DVT prevention). Dey awarded Centron AOR status for

its antidepressant Emsam. The agency also won AOR business from Strativa (an antifungal launching this summer); Cephalon’s Amrix (muscle relaxant); and Forest Laboratories’ Daxas (COPD). New med ed project wins included Acorda’s Ampyra (MS); Genzyme’s Renagel (chronic kidney disease); and a hepatitis C product from Vertex.

McLaughlin says digital has evolved from a stand-alone entity to an integrated part of the clients’ total marketing plans. She adds that the digital group (called Digiton) is “constantly exploring and learning new ways” to execute. Most clients have asked for help navigating social media. “We’ve discussed the positives and negatives using social media with all clients—on both the patient side and physician side,” McLaughlin notes. “They’re struggling with it. We’re helping guide them through figuring out what information is needed to determine corporate policy. Then we can decide



Above: An ad promoting an Eisai Oncology booth. Centron won two AOR assignments for Eisai last year

what’s good about [social media] for our needs and what the pitfalls are and together work toward what’s the right thing for a specific brand. It has to be done as part of the total marketing mix.”

The economy and healthcare reform are the biggest challenges McLaughlin sees going forward. “As details of healthcare reform bear out, the pharma sector will begin to feel a lot of the pain and have to respond to it,” she says. “As their partners, we will have to respond as well. Budgets are going to be tighter and clients are looking for agencies that can instantly become members of the brand team. They need us to address immediate and growing market challenges and ramp up over night.” —Tanya Lewis