



AT THE HELM

John Kane, principal and managing director, and Bob Finkel, principal and chief creative officer

PERFORMANCE

Ended 2009 up 4%

HIGHLIGHTS

Added new clients CNS Response, BioCodex, QLT Ophthalmics and AspenBio Pharma

Opened office in London to tap global opportunities

Increasing interactive work and adapting technology for healthcare

CHALLENGE

Finding someone to lead the London office; finalizing the growth plan

For contact details, service offerings and client roster, see Agency A-to-Z, beginning on page 173

“Creativity and innovation are still in demand, yet the need to demonstrate results is greater than ever”

—Bob Finkel

Kane & Finkel Healthcare Communications

Slow and steady growth helped San Francisco firm stay above the red line



San Francisco shop Kane & Finkel (K&F) ended last year up about 4%. Headcount remained pretty much flat at about 71, and it’s holding there. Principal and chief creative officer Bob Finkel feels fortunate to have grown even modestly given continued uncertainty in the industry, and he maintains a “chronically positive” attitude.

“It’s not in our nature to take a woe-is-me approach to the business,” Finkel says. “We’re engaged, positive-minded and we have an amazing, motivated staff. Clients are very cognizant of industry changes, issues, restriction, and hurdles. We help them navigate around those. It helps to have a dose of confidence and a bigger dose of success in terms of track record.”

Principal and managing director John Kane says clients last year were a bit more conservative and focused on ensuring the most positive and far-reaching outcomes. Finkel adds that ROI metrics are built in up front and monitored over time.

“Creativity and innovation are still in high demand, yet the practical need to demonstrate results is greater than ever,” Finkel says. “Clients still request...altruistic relationship building. The second request is proof that [programs] work.”

K&F grew existing global business with Astellas US, Astellas EU and corporate, including expanding work on Prograf into Asia and Latin America.

New clients included AspenBio Pharma (rule-out test device for appendicitis); QLT Ophthalmics’ Visudyne (wet age-related macular degeneration); CNS Response (an rEEG test); and the BioCodex’s Florastor (probiotic).

Both partners are very proud of the agency’s work conceiving and launching last year’s Transplant Expo, a traveling exhibition for Astellas US. “Seeing the Expo come to fruition and the incredible feedback was a highlight in terms of innovation,” Finkel says.

A London office opened this year to tap opportunities outside the US. The partners are negotiating with someone to lead it. Kane doesn’t want to “just impose our Americanized view,” noting he’ll staff the office with people who have experience within the European market. “We’re still finalizing our growth plan,” Kane says of the London office. “We’re not going to put any limits on it, but we’re not going to put 30 people there [right now].”

The partners are keeping an eye on how healthcare reform, economic forces and FDA conservatism will impact promotion. Finkel adds that the FDA’s “the whistle blower” program, i.e. DDMAC asking docs to report on misleading ads, was a shock to many.

“Everyone is trying to predict the future,” Finkel notes. “The signs and symptoms we’re seeing aren’t altogether positive, but we can’t conclude how it’ll play out.”

Interactive work is continually increasing, and K&F is adapting technology that’s used in other industries



Above: Ads, photos and collateral from last year’s Transplant Expo; Top: A few sales aids for Gilead’s BSI

to healthcare. Finkel won’t elaborate except to say it’s “robust and sophisticated” regarding ROI.

“Physician and patient communication has become more complicated because watchdog agencies are questioning things, yet we have new tools that allow to us to facilitate communication and expand reach,” Finkel says. “Those are two competing forces. There’s restricted access in one sense, but the tools are more sophisticated than traditional print.”

The partners anticipate a good year overall. “We’re excited about new opportunities,” Finkel says. “After 13 years...John and I are more immersed in the agency than ever. We’re turning a corner, and we feel positive about what lies in store.” —Tanya Lewis