



AT THE HELM

Principals Mike Sperling, Larry Wolheim, Stephen Mullens and Steven Gold

PERFORMANCE

Revenue and billings were up 38% in 2009

HIGHLIGHTS

Grew organically and added work with Amgen, Actelion, Coria Labs, Medivation and ChemGenex Pharmaceuticals

Staff grew by 30% to 45 in 2009, now at 50

Expanded digital business but operating in “channel agnostic mindset”

CHALLENGE

Finding talent to fill five-to-seven openings

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

Giant Creative/Strategy

Firm continues to get bigger, adding new business while growing organically



The recession certainly hasn't derailed Giant Creative/Strategy. Principal Steven Gold reports 2009 revenue and billings were up 38%, and he's expecting double-digit growth again this year.

“We're pleased the agency grew in a year of uncertainty and downsizing,” he says. “Our core business remained consistent. We have a very senior-level team that works day-to-day on the front lines with the clients, and that's where innovation comes from. We haven't sold ourselves as offering products per se like other agencies do in terms of innovation.”

As for most agencies, digital business has continued to increase. Gold describes Giant as operating “in a channel agnostic mindset.” George Fencl was recently hired as VP, account planning and digital strategy.

“We don't look to offer specific tactics,” Gold notes. “We believe in creating giant ideas and then taking advantage of all channels. We're building digital more from a strategic standpoint and less from a tactical standpoint.”

Gold says many clients are still trying to assess opportunities offered by digital channels and determine how various strategies and tactics best apply to brands. “Everyone wants the latest and the greatest,” he adds. “We're finding unique and innovative ways to get messages out.”

Overall staff increased last year by 30% to about 45 ending 2009, and it's up to 50 now. Kelly Lupton joined as director of business development. Adam Gelling was promoted to SVP, management supervisor and Alyse Sukalski was promoted to SVP, director of operations.

Both organic growth and new wins continued to fuel growth. Last year Giant helped legacy client Actelion Pharmaceuticals achieve double-digit growth with pulmonary arterial hypertension brands Tracleer and Ventavis (50% growth year over year). Actelion also assigned Giant work on an IV epoprostenol it acquired early in the year. Three additional brand assignments came in from Coria Laboratories (Atralin, Cloderm and Tetric), and Giant retained its Ranexa (chronic angina) business after Gilead Sciences acquired client CV Therapeutics.

The agency also successfully increased its oncology/hematology business, winning project work with Amgen for Neulasta (febrile neutropenia); ChemGenex Pharmaceuticals' Omapro (in clinical trials for a range of hematological malignancies); and a clinical trial recruitment and education campaign for Medivation (investigational prostate cancer agent MDV3100).

Gold has noticed increased legal and regulatory involvement at earlier stages. He cites cost, regulatory issues and navigation of the digital terrain as the main issues facing clients.

“Healthcare reform has everyone questioning... what's next,” he says. “Most think it'll result in contraction of cost and the amount of money pharma companies will be able to spend. Clients need agencies to be more value-oriented and deliver the highest



Above: Journal ads for Ventavis (left) and Epoprostenol (right); Top: From a professional ad for Tracleer

quality work at the best price.”

There are currently five-to-seven openings. “The pool has gotten larger—whether the talent has gotten better is questionable,” he says.

Focus for the rest of the year will be on managing growth and keeping up with the pressures of consolidation, cost containment and procurement. Gold will ensure that Giant continues to grow and operate as a strategic and creative partner to its clients. “[Agencies must] figure out how to operate efficiently and effectively for [clients] and still run a good business,” he says. “We've been able to do that.” —Tanya Lewis

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—Steven Gold