



AT THE HELM

Managing partners (clockwise) Bruce Epstein, Brian Wheeler, Bruce Medd and George Courides

PERFORMANCE

Revenue up 5% last year

HIGHLIGHTS

Added new divisions RevHealth Digital and RevHealth Managed Markets

Added wins from Watson, AOR status for Novartis' Fanapt and work for Bausch & Lomb and Daiichi-Sankyo

CHALLENGE

Balancing its core business with digital work

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

“We expanded services in a time that traditional promotion was shrinking”

—Bruce Epstein

RevHealth

Four-year-old agency finds luck with new name, divisions and project work



Founded in 2006, Revolution Health's motto is “With Change Comes Opportunity.” In keeping with that tradition, last year the agency was renamed RevHealth, which managing partner Bruce Epstein says aligns with its web address and avoids confusion with Revolution Health Network (merged with Waterfront Media in 2008). It also added RevHealth Digital and RevHealth Managed Markets, and its peer-to-peer communications group First Amendment was spun off.

“We expanded services in a time that traditional promotion was shrinking,” explains Epstein. “Pharma companies have cut back pretty dramatically on staff and on the number of products promoted. We did far less of our normal core business, like sales force promo pieces. But we picked up a lot of business in peer-to-peer and digital, which more than made up for the loss.”

Revenue increased by about 5% last year. The service expansion continues to bolster the agency, as revenue is up 15% this year.

Headcount increased from 40 in 2008 to 42 last year (with no layoffs), and it's up to 45 now. Jo Lis,

who was formerly a consultant, joined full time as director of digital solutions.

Epstein is a registered pharmacist in New Jersey and teaches a pharmaceutical advertising course at his alma mater, Ernest Mario School of Pharmacy at Rutgers University. He's had great success recruiting PharmDs as account managers and copywriters. Nine are currently on staff, up from seven ending 2009.

Last year's wins include two women's health launch brands from Watson Pharmaceuticals (promotion AOR) and peer-to-peer AOR status for Novartis' Fanapt (schizophrenia). The agency also picked up project work on four ophthalmology brands from Bausch & Lomb and project work in Daiichi-Sankyo's hypertension group. Lost were Bayer's Kogenate (hemophilia) to global consolidation and Oncaspar (leukemia) after Sigma-Tau Pharmaceuticals acquired Enzon Pharmaceuticals.

This year, RevHealth won managed market AOR status from Novartis' Zalbin (hepatitis) and project work on Novo Nordisk's Levemir (diabetes) and Axcan Pharma's Canasa (ulcerative colitis).

Epstein sees significant reductions in print work as clients move towards electronic media. He also notes time demands on doctors are driving increased direct to patient communication.

“Healthcare reform will make it worse,” he adds. “Doctors have to see more patients to make the same money, and the number of people in the system will increase. As technology improves it's easier [for pharma companies] to communicate to patients without huge cost.”



Above: Ads for Bausch & Lomb's Alex (left) and Merck's Invanz (right); Top: From a journal ad for SolFX

The agency launched Medical Charities of America this year, which coordinates and moderates discussions between advocacy groups, chronic disease patients, and pharma companies.

Epstein thinks agencies must master digital and become more medically focused to thrive in the current climate. “The pharma industry is in a reduction phase, and agencies are supportive of the pharma industry,” he says. “We have medically focused people who have a lot of experience. Even our entry-level people have very strong medical backgrounds. We're growing because pharma companies need our services, because our people have strong medical backgrounds.” — Tanya Lewis