



AT THE HELM

Carleen Kelly, president

PERFORMANCE

A “decent” year

HIGHLIGHTS

Retained Merck/Schering-Plough business after merger and added new assignment from Merck without a pitch

Launched a new indication for Merck’s Isentress

Hired Enrique Heredia as SVP, executive creative director in March 2010

Worked on message-platform development for Actelion and almorexant

CHALLENGE

Increase pitch activity

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

“This year, because of those new business wins, will be a great one for us”

—Carleen Kelly

Surge Worldwide Healthcare Communications

Cardio karma helps agency bag two CV wins, retain Vytorin/Zetia accounts



Client consolidation can be a nerve-racking experience for an agency, as post-merger cost-cutting almost always jeopardizes marketing budgets. Priority one in these situations is to hold onto rosters. During the 2009 merger of two of Surge’s biggest clients, Merck and Schering-Plough, this agency went with the flow, helping the clients manage the subsequent integration.

“It’s challenging, having to keep focused on the business with those companies while helping them [with their restructuring], too,” says Carleen Kelly, Surge president. “They are going through challenges and you are trying to guide them, to keep the work going, to be inspirational and motivational.”

Surge’s team not only retained the Merck professional cardiovascular franchise, including Vytorin and Zetia; but post-merger Merck delivered a new assignment without a pitch. “We feel that is due to having a satisfied and loyal client,” beams Kelly.

The Merck win, which Kelly declined to name, caps a decent year for this shop, which is part of Omnicom’s Corbett Accel Healthcare Group: several wins and a mix of work on products spanning pre-launch to mature

brands. (Kelly declined to state revenue growth.)

In May of this year, an existing client tapped Surge to work on the global launch of an unnamed cardiovascular compound. At the client’s behest, Surge reached out to its network to partner, and the two finally settled on TBWA/WorldHealth’s Paris branch for the global assist.

“Clients are looking to agencies to fill an evolving need for stronger global approaches to strategy and messaging,” Kelly says. “Can team leaders, working in specific brands, work more in a brand-stewardship approach with other marketing partners? Whether inside CAHG or outside our network, how well do we integrate and collaborate with additional marketing partners in supporting a brand?”

Those skills will be pressed into service on another CV assignment which came to Surge last year: professional AOR for Takeda’s hypertension franchise, including investigational compound azilsartan. As in the assignment involving TBWA, Surge will steward the azilsartan global, as well as US, launches. The agency also won new business on an unnamed antiviral product and landed Nutrisystem D, a food program designed to help manage diabetes, which Surge will target to professionals.

The agency continued its work in the antiviral space, where Surge handles vaccines as well as therapeutics, including Merck’s HIV drug Isentress. The agency launched a new Isentress indication—first-line ther-



Above: An unbranded disease state ad created for Takeda; Top: Part of an ad for Merck’s ProQuad

apy for treatment-naïve patients. It also worked on message-platform development for Actelion and its phase III insomnia compound Almorexant, which Surge landed in early 2009.

On the personnel front, in March of this year Surge hired Enrique Heredia as SVP, executive creative director. The agency had been without an ECD for a year and a half. Also, Surge added a new group: channel planning—designed to assist clients in making more efficient marketing-channel decisions.

Kelly would like to see pitch activity pick up. If the last 12 months are any indication, budgets are loosening. “Accounts we’ve won [in 2009] are starting to prepare for the marketplace,” she says. “This year, because of those new business wins, will be a great one for us.” —Marc Iskowitz